

**The Listening, The Stillness, The Call, The Echo:
Re-Storying educational systems to address anti-Indigenous racism in education**

MEd Portfolio
LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY



Amanda Mathias
Student ID: 1175779
Supervisor: Dr. Lisa Korteweg
Committee Member: Dr. Sharla Mskokii Peltier
August 30, 2026

Acknowledgements

Completing this portfolio has been a profound gift.

I want to express my gratitude to my portfolio supervisor, Dr. Lisa Korteweg for her generosity of time, ongoing guidance, and support. *Wijigaabawitawaagang* is a word in my language that means to stand with someone, to literally or figuratively position themselves right beside them in a fight, effort, or journey. She stood with me in this learning journey for the last several months, as an ally and mentor. I am grateful.

Miigwech to Dr. Sharla Mskokii Peltier for her inspirational scholarship in Anishinaabe Storywork, Circle Pedagogy, Land-based learning, and cultural relationality. It is an honour to have her as a committee member and review my portfolio.

Miigwech to my partners in this Indigenous Education journey. This includes advisory circles, families, youth and community. It includes fellow educators throughout many different systems. It includes many Elders, knowledge keepers and artists. I am truly fortunate and grateful to be in your circles.

I give my sincere appreciation to my friends and community who have guided me, and to my supportive and loving family who have encouraged and inspired this learning journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	2
Portfolio Overview.....	3
Chapter One - Literature Review - The Listening.....	5
Opening Story: The Maang/Loon Teaching.....	5
Positionality and Introduction.....	6
Purpose and Rationale.....	7
Research Question and Sub-Questions.....	8
Background and Context.....	9
Literature Review Map.....	
A Wholistic Storywork Framework & Methodology For Re-Storying Education.....	11
Ethics and Data Sources.....	13
The Maang/Loon Re-Storying Framework.....	14
Contributions of the Portfolio.....	18
Conclusion.....	19
Chapter 2 - Re-Storying for Policy/Guidelines - The Stillness.....	21
Chapter 3 - The Call - Re-Storying Relational Response Guide.....	24
Chapter 4 - Reflection - The Echo.....	32
References.....	36
Portfolio Appendices.....	41
Appendix A.....	41
Appendix B.....	51

Portfolio Overview

Lakehead University's MEd portfolio can be a collection of creative, scholarly, and technical products created for professional use, allowing the development of resources that connect theory to practice in educational work. This portfolio includes an introduction/overview and four Chapters. The four chapters are the literature review, a resource that benefits education (a policy guideline), a relational response (Human Rights), and a reflection. This portfolio is organized through the Maang/Loon teaching as four interconnected movements: The Listening, The Stillness, The Call, and The Echo. These movements structure the portfolio chapters: literature review, policy/guideline reflection, relational response guide, and critical reflection. Together, they support a re-storying approach to anti-Indigenous racism grounded in Miigiwewin, Miingweziwin, Anishinaabewin, Odenang Inquiry, and relational accountability.

In this portfolio, the Maang/Loon framework guides how the work is approached, while re-storying names the process of challenging anti-Indigenous racism in northern Ontario provincial schools. Within this organizational framework, the research question and sub-questions ask how a re-storying framework can support educational systems while amplifying Indigenous student, family, and community voices. Through Listening, Stillness, Call, and Echo, this framework offers a cyclical and relational way to move from deep listening toward accountable future action.

Chapter One - Literature Review - The Listening

This chapter reflects the framework's Listening phase. Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are sought to uproot, seed, and nurture social justice in education. The literature review is rooted in Indigenous Storywork, wholistic theory, Miigiwewin, Miingweziwin, Anishinaabewin, Odenang Inquiry, anti-Indigenous racism, decolonizing education, Two-Eyed Seeing, and relational accountability. It gathers the knowledge, teachings, and scholarship needed to understand the roots of the problem and the possibilities for transformation towards social justice in education. The literature review synthesizes academic sources, identifies major themes, tensions, and contributions across the literature, including the limits of inclusion, the systemic nature of anti-Indigenous racism, the importance of Indigenous-led pedagogy, and the ethical responsibilities of re-storying education.

The Listening reflects the Maang teaching that meaningful leadership begins with a deep examination beneath the surface. In education, this means reviewing and reflecting on policy statements to examine the underlying structures, assumptions, histories, and stories that shape school systems. Before change can occur, the “water” of the institution—its norms, biases, silences, and power relations—must be understood through relational listening and critical reflection.

In this chapter focused on academia and Indigenous scholarship, listening also amplifies Indigenous voice and wisdom by amplifying and/or “listening” to Indigenous academic scholars by citing their important, authentic, and meaningful work. These scholars are trailblazers and knowledge keepers.

Chapter 2 - Re-Storying for Policy/Guidelines - The Stillness

The second chapter is an applied practitioner inquiry focused on selected policy and guideline areas connected to anti-Indigenous racism and Indigenous student well-being. This task corresponds primarily to The Stillness. This chapter focuses on a particular set of public and approved documents to develop a focused reflection on omissions, misrepresentations, tensions, or areas requiring further development. This has led to specific recommendations for the formal creation of an Indigenous education policy and guidelines that address the following:

Collaboration/Co-creation/Communication requirements, Commitments of Northern Ontario School Boards, Self-Identification, Land Acknowledgments, and Data & Data Sovereignty. The policy is a starting point, as directly related to student success and well-being. This concise analysis and set of considerations will inform future policy work in Indigenous education.

The Stillness represents an intentional pause for reflection and critical inquiry. In this phase, institutions examine policies, practices, and assumptions through a relational lens to ensure that change is grounded in understanding rather than urgency alone. In this case, an academic publication, the “Stillness,” resists the colonial pressure to solve problems, rush toward solutions and action before real relationships, understandings, and true co-creation of a shared path can exist, with a two-eyed seeing philosophy.

Chapter 3 - The Call - Re-Storying Relational Response Guide

The third chapter is an applied framework product: a re-storying relational response guide for educators and/or administrators. Drawing on the literature review, policy reflection and recommendations, the guide will invite educators into the Maang/Loon re-storying framework

and offer literature-informed principles, reflective prompts, and relational considerations for addressing anti-Indigenous racism through relational accountability.

This chapter will share how one aspect of the policy (from chapter 2), specifically, uprooting Indigenous racism through the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) honours Anishinabek rights to cultural absences without penalty. The chapter (guide) will support educators and administrators in supporting anti-Indigenous racism efforts by situating themselves in the work, listening, developing a better understanding, building relationships, and being active in re-storying. Honouring experiences, accreditation and properly recording approved cultural absences may produce a more accurate and respectful account of student participation, but the purpose of this chapter is not to measure improvement in attendance statistics.

The Call represents a shift from reflection to action grounded in relational accountability. The Call, in this academic use, involves educator learning, policy reflection, Indigenous-led pedagogy, and practical tools that support systemic change. This chapter is intended to inform future educator learning and administrator reflection in the broader 2026–2027 funded project. Within the MEd portfolio, however, its purpose is conceptual and preparatory: to translate the literature and Maang/Loon framework into a practical but provisional resource for future community-led implementation and revision.

Chapter 4 - Reflection - The Echo

The Echo represents community accountability. In the Maang teaching, the voice is never projected in isolation. Maang pauses, listens, and waits for the echo before singing the next note. In educational systems, the Echo is the commitment to respect, responsibility, reciprocity, relationship, and reconciliation. The Echo becomes the framework's accountability mechanism. It reminds educational systems that the next action must be shaped by what returns from students, families, communities, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and the Land itself. In relationship to this portfolio, the ECHO will be my personal reflection as Mother, Daughter, Aunty, Artist and Educator as a member of Teme-Augama Anishinabek.

The portfolio's four interrelated chapters meet the expectations of the MEd portfolio by combining scholarly, applied, technical, and reflective components. Aspects of this portfolio may inform meaningful future change through the broader 2026–2027 community-led project.

Chapter 1: The Listening – Literature Review

This chapter is a review of the scholarship on Indigenous storywork, holistic theory, and relational accountability seeking wisdom, knowledge and understanding to uproot anti-Indigenous racism and nurture more social justice in education. This conceptual framework is organized through Listening, Stillness, Call, and Echo from the Maang teaching and/or framework.

Opening Story: The Maang/Loon Teaching

A long time ago, when the world was still finding its rhythm, the Creator looked down at the beautiful systems of the earth: the forests, the moving waters, and the many different beings. Nevertheless, there was a silence that felt heavy. The land had a voice, but it needed a way to be carried. The Creator needed a speaker, someone who could translate the heart of the water into a sound that everyone could understand.

The animal candidates arrived with thunderous steps and the shadow of wings. Bear stood tall and let out a roar that could shake the trees. Bear believed leadership was strength and power. Eagle soared and boasted that his sight could oversee all of Turtle Island. Eagle thought leadership was oversight. Wolf offered his howl, a sound of fierce loyalty to the pack. Wolf believed leadership was a matter of following the lead.

Many animals came forward. Then Maang, the Loon, swam forward, quiet and low in the water. Maang did not beat its chest or climb to the highest peak. Instead, Maang did something the others forgot to do: it dove deep.

Maang went under the surface, down into the dark, cold places where the most ancient stories of the water live. It stayed there a long time and listened to the heartbeat of the earth. When Maang finally came back to the surface, it waited until the lake was a perfect mirror. Then it opened its beak and released the haunting, beautiful call we hear today.

Maang lets out its voice and then tilts its head. It is listening. It is waiting for the echo. It knows that the hills, the trees, and the water will catch that sound and send it back. Only when Maang hears the echo does it know its message has been received. Only then does it know how to sing the next note. Maang never calls twice in the same way.

The Creator saw this and said, “You shall be our voice. Not because you are the strongest or the loudest, but because you know that a leader’s voice is nothing without the echo of the community.”
(A story retold from Teme-Augama Anishnabek)

Positionality and Introduction

Amanda Nindizhinakaaz, Aanjii-Giiziz Kwe Anishinabek Nindigoo. Maang Nindoodem. Teme-Augama Anishnabek Nindoojabaa. Changing Moon Woman is my name. I belong to the Loon clan, and I am from Teme-Augama Anishnabek. I share the Maang teaching from my community because as an educator who works directly in Indigenous education, this teaching is the guide for my portfolio work on anti-Indigenous racism in education.

Currently, I am the K-12 Program Coordinator and Indigenous Education Lead for a northern Ontario school board. This role includes developing and implementing the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Board Action Plan, supporting strategic planning, working with data and reporting, supporting students and staff, and fostering community engagement. I work alongside eight First Nations communities, community partners and agencies, and other school board departments. I also serve in community and professional roles connected to Indigenous education, including work with ETFO provincial Indigenous education, my community’s Education Authority, and the local Friendship Centre.

I am grateful to have learned directly from Cultural Knowledge Keepers, Elders, Language Keepers, artists, and community members throughout my life. I have been an educator for more than twenty years, with fifteen years of direct experience in Indigenous education leadership. Most importantly, I am a mother of two children, who continue to inspire this work. My daughter is a language learner and multidisciplinary artist who participates in the resurgence of Anishinabek artistic practice. My son is a fire keeper, a musician, and someone who prioritizes land-based knowledge systems on our traditional territories. We live this life. This portfolio is therefore significant to me personally, professionally, and relationally. I understand this work as a contribution to Mino-Bimaadiziwin, the good life, through my responsibilities as an educator, mother, community member, and practitioner-scholar.

This literature and larger portfolio emerge from my responsibilities as an Anishinabek educator and leader working within school systems still shaped by colonial histories, policies, and practices. It also emerges from the voices of students, families, communities, and educators

who have identified anti-Indigenous racism as an urgent concern. The Maang teaching offers a way to think about leadership differently: not as control, authority, or oversight, but as deep listening, purposeful action, and ongoing accountability to the echo of community.

Purpose and Rationale

Miigiwewin describes the act of giving. In a spiritual context, it describes sacred gifts. Miigiwewin is an acknowledgement of interconnectedness and reciprocity. It is an understanding of inherent gifts and teachings. Giving is considered a way to honour oneself, others, and the Creator. Through sharing, one participates in the stewardship of the gift rather than claiming ownership over it. Miingweziwin speaks to passing on, giving, and sharing our gifts, including teachings such as the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

Guided by the Anishinabek teachings of *Miigiwewin* (sacred giving) and *Miingweziwin* (the passing on of gifts), this literature review contends that addressing anti-Indigenous racism in education requires a fundamental re-storying of educational systems grounded in reciprocity, relational accountability, and community leadership. Within these teachings, giving is not a transactional act but an ethical responsibility to honour the interconnectedness between self, community, and the Creator. Knowledge, therefore, is not owned but stewarded, and its sharing reflects an ongoing commitment to relational balance and responsibility.

This literature review explores how a re-storying framework grounded in Miigiwewin, Miingweziwin, the Maang/Loon teaching, and relational accountability can support educational systems in addressing anti-Indigenous racism in education. This portfolio will develop a literature-informed conceptual framework and an applied practitioner inquiry that can guide future policy reflection, educator learning, student and community voice, and systemic change.

This chapter remains part of the MEd portfolio and offers provisional applied groundwork; it does not represent full implementation or evaluation of the broader 2026–2027 project. It develops the literature-informed, Anishinabek-grounded, and methodologically responsible foundation for future community-led work. The larger project involves policy review, a learning journey through re-storying frameworks and a critical reflection on the learning process.

As the literature shows, inclusion alone does not transform the institutional stories, policies, and relationships that sustain anti-Indigenous racism. Inclusion may invite Indigenous content into existing structures, but it does not necessarily transform the institutional stories,

policies, assumptions, and relationships that continue to produce harm. Re-storying requires a deeper shift: from ownership to stewardship, from institutional authority to relational accountability, from deficit narratives to Indigenous student gifts, and from unilateral action to community echo.

This work therefore understands re-storying as both a pedagogical approach and an ethical responsibility. It invites educational systems to listen beneath the surface, pause for reflection, act with purpose, and remain accountable to the community response. The Maang/Loon teaching (above) provides the organizational structure for this literature review: *The Listening, The Stillness, The Call, and The Echo*. Within this work, re-storying is understood as a process of uprooting harmful institutional narratives, seeding more truthful and relational understandings, and nurturing educational responsibilities that are accountable to Indigenous students, families, communities, and Nations. This framework represents *how* work moves forward.

This portfolio is an applied practitioner inquiry grounded in Indigenous Storywork, wholistic theory, Anishinaabewin, Odenang Inquiry, Two-Eyed Seeing, and relational accountability. It uses my personal and professional context as an applied site of reflection and framework development. The inquiry asks how the Maang/Loon re-storying framework can support anti-Indigenous racism work in educational systems while remaining accountable to Indigenous knowledge, community voice, and ethical responsibility.

Indigenous pedagogy and critical theory explain that anti-Indigenous racism lives in systemic structures that practices of inclusion cannot begin to address. True transformation requires Indigenous-led pedagogies and deep listening, positioning communities as leaders. Understanding systemic racism, engaging relational frameworks like *Miigiwewin*, and advancing re-storying practices through *Miingweziwin* can support those frameworks.

Drawing on Indigenous knowledge systems, where knowledge is stewarded, not owned (Benton-Banai, 1988), this approach highlights the *Maang* teaching of call and echo. It emphasizes relational accountability and the resilience of Indigenous systems despite colonial disruption (Maracle, 2011). This focuses on Indigenous knowledge as the roots of growth and on addressing systemic injustice through re-storying education as a relational, community-based process.

Research Question and Sub-Questions

The central research question guiding this literature review and portfolio study is:

How can a re-storying framework grounded in Miigiwewin, Miingweziwin, and relational accountability support educational systems in addressing anti-Indigenous racism in education and amplifying Indigenous student, family, and community voices?

This central question will be explored with the following sub-questions:

- How do Indigenous Storywork, wholistic theory, anti-racist education, and decolonizing education contribute to a re-storying framework for addressing anti-Indigenous racism?
- How can the Maang/Loon teaching organize a process of listening, reflection, action, and accountability in educational systems?
- How can Miigiwewin and Miingweziwin help reframe knowledge, policy, pedagogy, and leadership as forms of relational stewardship rather than institutional ownership?
- What ethical responsibilities arise when using practitioner knowledge, public documents, secondary materials, and approved community or youth voice in anti-Indigenous racism work?

Background and Context

The professional context for this portfolio is a northern Ontario school board with an Indigenous Education Council that guides the Board Action Plan for Indigenous Education. Through this process, Indigenous education priorities influence board and school improvement planning, strategic planning, and decision-making. Across the board, school-specific First Nation Education Councils and school-community relationships support a model of co-creation and collaboration. Education Service Agreements and Reciprocal Education Agreements (REAs) also shape relationships with First Nations communities and guide significant allocations through the Board Action Plan, REA, and grant funding.

The Indigenous Youth Circle brings together youth leaders from secondary schools across the district. Each secondary school also has a larger Indigenous youth group, a youth space, and designated educators who support Indigenous student achievement and well-being. Youth leadership and advisory circles have identified anti-Indigenous racism as an urgent concern. In response, an Anti-Indigenous Racism Working Group was formed, consisting of educational representatives from five First Nations communities that send students to the western

region of the board, along with youth, parent, community, Elder, and school board representation.

This context includes an Indigenous Education Council, school-specific First Nation Education Councils, Education Service Agreements, Reciprocal Education Agreements, Indigenous Youth Circle structures, youth spaces, designated Indigenous student support educators, and Oshkishkode Youth Leadership. These structures provide important pathways through which Indigenous student, family, and community voice can inform board priorities and future anti-racism work.

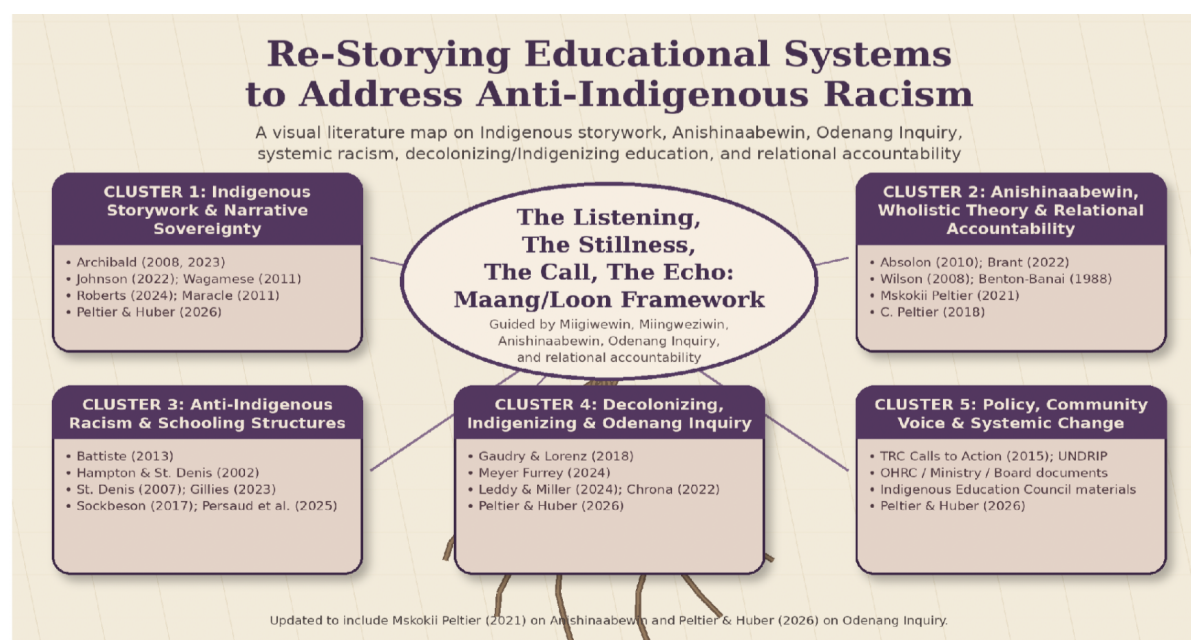
This group has advised that a framework and action plan to uproot racism be developed, with a foundation in the Seven Grandfather Teachings and re-storying. This is where the roots of this portfolio were seeded. The portfolio responds to these contexts but does not claim to speak for all communities or complete the broader system-level project. Instead, it uses this professional context as an applied site of reflection and framework development. It recognizes that relationships between anti-Indigenous racism and student outcomes are complex. It does not claim a simple causal relationship between racism and any single outcome. Rather, it examines how institutional racism may interact with cultural safety, student well-being, attendance, curriculum, policy, community relationships, and the stories educational systems tell about Indigenous students and families.

Literature Review Map

The literature review is a synthesized discussion of the scholarship that grounds the re-storying framework. This review relates the literature through the movements of the Maang/Loon teaching: Listening, Stillness, Call, and Echo. It is also organized into five overlapping clusters. These clusters reflect the cyclical nature of the Maang/Loon framework and the portfolio's focus on anti-Indigenous racism, re-storying, relational accountability, and systemic educational change. A visual version of this literature map follows the chart to show how the five clusters inform the Maang/Loon framework.

Cluster	Key Sources	Contribution to Portfolio
---------	-------------	---------------------------

Indigenous Storywork, Re-Storying, and Narrative Sovereignty	Archibald, Johnson, Roberts, Wagamese, Maracle, Peltier & Huber	Story is not simply illustrative; it is pedagogical, methodological, relational, and ethical. This cluster supports the use of story and re-storying as a framework for educational change.
Miigwewin, Miingweziwin, Wholistic Theory, and Relational Accountability	Absolon, Brant, Peltier, Wilson, Benton-Banai, Peltier & Huber	Knowledge is understood as a living, relational gift that must be received, held, shared, and returned responsibly. This cluster supports the framework's ethical grounding and use of Anishinaabewin, circle pedagogy, Land/Place, and relational accountability.
anti-Indigenous racism and Institutional Schooling Structures	Battiste, Gillies, Hampton & St. Denis, Sockbeson, St. Denis	anti-Indigenous racism is understood as systemic and institutional, not simply interpersonal. This cluster helps frame deficit thinking, cognitive imperialism, and colonial schooling structures.
Decolonizing, Indigenizing, and the Limits of Inclusion	Gaudry & Lorenz, Chrona, Meyer Furrey, Leddy & Miller, Persaud et al., Peltier & Huber	This cluster explains why inclusion is not enough and why anti-racist educational change must attend to Indigenous sovereignty, land, spiritual dimensions, and community authority.
Policy, Community voice, and Systemic Change	TRC, UNDRIP, OHRC, Ministry and board documents, Indigenous education council materials, Peltier & Huber	This cluster supports the applied dimensions of the portfolio. It helps link literature to policy reflection, educator learning, student well-being, attendance/absence supports, and future community-led change without claiming direct causal impact on outcomes.



A Wholistic Storywork Framework & Methodology For Re-Storying Education

This literature review is guided by an Indigenous conceptual framework grounded in relational and wholistic approaches to knowledge, drawing on Indigenous Storywork (Archibald, 2008) and Indigenous wholistic theory (Absolon, 2010). Together, these perspectives position knowledge as a living, relational process that engages the heart, mind, body, and spirit, challenging Eurocentric models that fragment learning and privilege detached, linear analysis.

At the centre of this framework is Storywork, which understands stories as living teachings that carry intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and relational knowledge. Storywork emphasizes “educating the heart” and engaging knowledge through reflection, relationship, and accountability.

Absolon’s (2010) Indigenous wholistic theory complements Storywork by emphasizing the interconnectedness of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical dimensions of knowing. Wholistic theory helps challenge Eurocentric models that separate mind from body, policy from relationship, and academic knowledge from lived responsibility. It examines the importance of relationships and relational responsibility, positioning learners and educators within relationality. It reinforces that addressing anti-Indigenous racism requires more than awareness. It requires a shift in how educators and systems understand their roles within relationships, communities, and histories.

These frameworks align with *Miigwewin* and *Miingweziwin*, positioning knowledge as a shared and sacred gift that must be received, held, and passed on responsibly. This understanding of knowledge challenges hierarchical models of education by reframing learning as stewardship grounded in reciprocity and community.

Within this framework, educational transformation is understood as a relational process unfolding through relational engagement, relational accountability, and re-storying. Aligned with *Miingweziwin*, these movements emphasize the responsibility to share knowledge in ways that restore balance, challenge dominant narratives, and support community-led change.

The Wholistic Storywork framework allows for education to be re-envisioned as a practice of relational accountability. Within that, qualitative, interpretive approaches grounded in Indigenous relational frameworks are employed, informed by Indigenous Storywork (Archibald, 2008) and storytelling as both pedagogy and methodology, guided by seven principles: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. This ensures knowledge is approached as a relational teaching that requires reflection, listening, and

accountability (not extraction).

The methodology reflects Miigwewin and Miingweziwin, recognizing engagement with scholarship as an act of receiving and sharing knowledge. In alignment with this, this review echoes a relational process that honours the teachings within the literature while contributing to the ongoing work of re-storying education. As Brant (2022) highlights, "methodologically, ... engaging a research design that could account for the cultural and spiritual dimensions of our lives, capture the multi-layered complexities of our experiences, and foster a collective space for healing and transformation" (p. 31).

Mskokii Peltier's (2021) Anishinaabewin framework further inspired methodologies to support an Anishinabek way of coming to know, describing Indigenous research as a process of living in story as a critical thinker, action-taker, and reflective person while navigating the borderland between the academy and Anishinaabewin. This approach provides a way to honour both academic expectations and Anishinabek responsibilities, which is a deeply significant understanding and echoes the teachings of Miigwewin and Miingweziwin, offered by local Elders to root this work—Peltier's relational, storied, community-rooted, and Land-connected ways of knowing foster humility and integrity. Peltier and Huber's (2026) emphasis on Odenang Inquiry, as a methodology and framework, emphasizes truth-telling and relationship-building in reconciliation, Anishinabek Wiijiindowin, story pedagogy, and relational self-study. Their work has guided the Loon/Maang framework as it presents Indigenous pedagogy as honouring story, Circle, reflective thinking, Land/Place, inquiry planning, belonging, and co-created relationships to shift the educational paradigm itself. This aligns closely with the Maang/Loon framework, where the work begins in listening, moves through stillness, calls with purpose, and returns to the echo of community.

The Two-Eyed Seeing philosophy (Peltier, 2018) also provides a way to work with Indigenous and Western knowledge systems without collapsing one into the other. Two-Eyed Seeing supports the careful use of public documents, policy materials, and school system evidence while maintaining a commitment to Indigenous relational accountability, community authority, and non-extractive practice. This requires ethical attention to how knowledge is gathered, held, interpreted, and shared.

Meyer Furrey's (2024) discussion of pedagogical and strategic blind spots further informs this framework. Critical theories of education can name inequity and power, but they

may still miss Indigenous sovereignty, land-based knowledge, spiritual dimensions, and the ontological foundations of Indigenous education. Relational bridging is needed. Brant's (2022) interpretive lens, informed by the Sweetgrass Basket metaphor, emphasizes the interconnectedness of intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and communal dimensions of learning. This speaks to the need for meaningful relational understanding to achieve educational transformation.

Dion's (2016) work on mediating the space between Indigenous youth voices and educators' voices further supports the relational and pedagogical work required for reconciliation in education. This theory reinforces the attention to voice, listening, and the responsibilities of educational systems to respond without reducing students' experiences to metrics alone, throughout the Loon/Maang framework.

Indigenous frameworks are not a generic social justice model. Instead, it begins with Anishinaabe teachings, Storywork, holistic theory, Anishinaabewin, Odenang Inquiry, and relational accountability as the roots to grow from in re-storying education. This, in addition to the teachings of Miigwewin and Miingweziwin, through engagement with scholarship, becomes an act of receiving and sharing knowledge responsibly. The framework (literature review, policy reflection, applied tasks, and self-reflection as relational practices) is Re-storying rooted in Anishinabek ways of knowing.

Ethics and Data Sources

Miigwewin and Miingweziwin honour research ethics by emphasizing reciprocity, responsibility, relational accountability, and the non-ownership of knowledge. This literature review and the full portfolio do not collect new primary data from human participants. It relies on public and approved secondary documents, practitioner reflection, and literature-based analysis. Any use of student, family, or community voice is limited to materials that are already publicly shared, formally approved, anonymized, or ethically available for educational reporting.

The literature review and larger portfolio do not include identifiable or confidential participant information without appropriate approval. This ethical boundary is important because anti-Indigenous racism work often involves stories of harm, resistance, and institutional failure. These stories cannot be treated as extractive evidence for academic purposes. The portfolio will therefore distinguish between public documents, practitioner reflection, and community/youth voice.

The materials used in the portfolio fall into three categories:

1. Public and approved secondary documents, including public board policies, Ministry of Education documents, funding application materials, public reports, approved minutes, and published reports.
2. Practitioner reflection and experience, including my reflections as an Indigenous education leader, my positionality, professional learning, and the retelling of teachings and stories that I have permission and responsibility to carry.
3. Community and youth voice, only when drawn from public record, approved documents, anonymized materials, or formally authorized sources. Materials that are not approved for this purpose remain contextual and are not treated as portfolio data. Where local Anishinaabe stories or teachings are used, they are included only when I have permission and responsibility to carry them, and they are used as teaching and framework sources rather than as extracted participant data.

If any future component of the broader 2026–2027 project involves collecting new data from students, families, educators, or community members, that work will require separate ethical review and/or approval processes. The MEd portfolio remains focused on literature, approved/public materials, practitioner reflection, and framework development.

The Maang/Loon Re-Storying Framework

This portfolio's organizational design mirrors the Maang/Loon teaching from Teme-Augama Anishnabek. The framework is organized through four movements: The Listening, The Stillness, The Call, and The Echo. These movements are not linear steps to be completed once. They are cyclical and relational. Each movement returns to the others as new learning, responsibilities, and community responses emerge.

The Maang/Loon framework provides a way to think about educational leadership and anti-racism differently. It resists leadership as loudness, control, or authority. It instead understands leadership as the capacity to dive deeply, listen carefully, act with purpose, and wait for the echo of community before moving forward. Through the four movements of Listening, Stillness, Call, and Echo, the framework supports a process of uprooting harmful institutional narratives, seeding more accountable relationships, and nurturing future community-led educational change.

The Listening: Relationship, Listening, and Learning

The first movement, *The Listening*, reflects the Maang (Loon) teaching that meaningful leadership begins with a deep examination beneath the surface. In education, moving beyond policy statements requires examining the underlying structures, assumptions, and histories that shape systems. Before change can occur, the “water” of the institution—its norms, biases, and power structures—must be understood through relational listening and critical reflection. As Gillies (2023) emphasized, “if we are to move past performative anti-racism, institutions must stop defending their intent and start listening to the experiential knowledge of those navigating the system daily” (p. 74). The problem must be understood and acknowledged.

Anti-Indigenous racism lives through embedded systemic practices. Gillies (2023) identifies deficit thinking and cultural essentialism as mechanisms that position Indigenous students as the problem rather than examining the structures that produce harm. Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) demonstrate that many Indigenization efforts remain at the level of inclusion or symbolic reconciliation, reinforcing colonial structures rather than transforming them. Educators must also confront their own positionality through engagement with local histories, identities, and the legacy of colonial systems. Persaud et al. (2025) further highlight how curricular erasure and standardized measures can marginalize Indigenous knowledge and identity, calling for relational accountability in which educators become co-creators of centring with communities. Community action circles emerge as essential spaces for centring and amplifying First Nations voices and positioning community as leaders for change. Anti-racism protocols grounded in restorative justice are critical, ensuring institutions respond to harm in ways that prioritize healing and relational accountability.

The Listening is therefore an active and ongoing process. Without deep engagement and reflection, efforts to address anti-Indigenous racism risk remaining superficial and disconnected from lived realities. The Listening therefore requires educators and educational systems to confront positionality, local histories, colonial structures, and the limits of institutional intent. It also requires culturally responsive local research, amplifying Indigenous scholarly voices, community action circles, student voice, family voice, and First Nations leadership as central sources of knowledge.

The Stillness: Reflection, Reverence, Relevance, and Research

Following the Listening, the Stillness represents an intentional pause for reflection and critical inquiry. In this phase, institutions examine policies, practices, and assumptions

through a relational lens to ensure that change is grounded in understanding rather than urgency alone. Stillness resists the colonial pressure to rush toward solutions before relationships, local histories, complete understanding, and true collaboration can exist. Grounded in this refusal of urgency, "slow is not merely the opposite of fast; rather, it is a way of being in the world, where one is thoughtful, reflective, engaged, and relational with other humans and creation" (Leddy & Miller, 2024, p. 3).

Hampton and St. Denis (2002) argue that the so-called achievement gap must be understood in relation to systemic racism, not student deficits. This argument supports the need for careful review of curriculum, assessment, discipline, attendance, governance, and policy.

The Stillness also shifts reflection from individual awareness to institutional accountability. De Leeuw, Cameron, and Greenwood (2012) emphasize spaces of friendship and relational connection as alternatives to extractive research models and as ways to centre community voice.

Barkaskas and Gladwin (2021) show how talking circles can disrupt hierarchical learning structures and support collective dialogue, fostering relational accountability. Leddy and Miller (2024) further caution against the culture of speed in education and advocate for slow, reflective pedagogies that honour relational complexity. This pause allows educators to engage deeply with frameworks such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) while strengthening relationships with First Nations communities.

Peltier and Huber's (2026) Odenang Inquiry described the need for reflective thinking, story circles, small-group relational learning, and inquiry planning to create conditions for belonging and learning. Their work suggests that transformative Indigenous pedagogies interrupt the narrowness of colonial schooling by centring children, families, communities, Lands/Places, and more-than-human relationships as holders and makers of knowledge. The Stillness therefore asks educational systems to pause long enough to recognize what has been omitted, misrepresented, or normalized. It seeks community guidance for knowledge, understanding and process for change to occur. It creates the conditions for policy reflection, community-led inquiry, and educator learning. Stillness is required in the learning journey towards systemic change.

The Call: Relationality, Respect, and Reconciliation

Emerging from Stillness, The Call represents a shift from reflection to action grounded in relational accountability. In the Maang teaching, the call is purposeful and shaped by what has been heard. Similarly, educational responses to anti-Indigenous racism must move beyond acknowledgment toward transformation, ensuring that action is guided by listening and stillness rather than institutional defensiveness or performative urgency. This transformative call addresses what Battiste (2013) identified as the paramount task of educational reform: "The most critical cultural challenge facing humanity is displacing systemic discrimination against Indigenous peoples created and legitimized by the cognitive frameworks of imperialism and colonialism... The destiny of a people is intricately bound to the way its children are educated" (p. 162). Recognizing education as a key site of cognitive imperialism—where Eurocentric knowledge systems dominate, and Indigenous knowledges are marginalized—requires a fundamental shift from teaching about Indigenous peoples to teaching from Indigenous perspectives and in true partnership with Indigenous communities.

Peltier's (2018) work on Two-Eyed Seeing supports this shift by emphasizing relational weaving rather than assimilation of Indigenous knowledge into Western frameworks. However, policy change alone is insufficient. Sockbeson (2017) argues that educational mandates fail without anti-racist conviction and political will. Chrona (2022) similarly calls for action-oriented practice in which Indigenous pedagogies are centred across learning environments. The Call centres Indigenous-led pedagogy, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Indigenous educators, student and community voice and the work of Indigenous scholars. The Call fosters a shift from passive commitment to active responsibility. It reflects an ongoing process of reconciliation rooted in relational accountability, where action is guided by what has been learned through listening and stillness. It examines current educational structures in juxtaposition to create something new and better. Moreover, most importantly, the call invites people into this educational journey.

The Echo: Responsibility, Reciprocity, and Re-Storying

The Echo, following the Listening, the Stillness, and the Call, represents relational and community accountability. In the Maang teaching, the voice is never projected in isolation. Maang pauses, listens, and waits for the echo before singing the next note. In educational

systems, the Echo rejects one-directional institutional monologues and asks whether actions have been received as meaningful, whether harm has been reduced, whether relationships have strengthened, and whether community voice has shaped the next step.

It is an interactive and relational cycle. It asks educational systems to move away from performance-based compliance metrics and toward forms of accountability shaped by the feedback, well-being, and self-determination of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

To rewrite the story of education is to enact Miingweziwin by returning knowledge and agency to the communities and students whose lives are most affected by educational systems. Re-storying requires the transformation of colonial narratives of deficit, erasure, and control. Johnson (2022) influences the returning of knowledge and agency to its rightful stewards. Re-storying requires a profound paradigm shift where Eurocentric, colonial narratives of deficit and erasure are completely rewritten through the integration of lived Indigenous realities, structural accountability, and community sovereignty.

True reciprocity, or Miigiwewin, requires educational institutions to understand allyship as a verb. In alignment with LeMay (2025), allyship within educational systems must not be treated as a passive identity or a performative label. Instead, it must be understood as an active and ongoing process of intentional action. To move institutional conversations beyond performative words, organizational leaders and educators must implement practical tools that shift power dynamics and provide tangible support to Indigenous colleagues and communities. Just as the Maang does not sing the next note until the echo returns, educators and institutions must remain willing to pause, adapt, and adjust their strategies in response to the community's reaction to institutional actions. This structural act of pausing resists colonial pacing and honours the community's role as the final evaluator of educational reform.

Grounded in Brant's (2022) sweetgrass framework and the narrative healing models explored by Gauthier (2025), institutional shifts must support holistic self-reclamation. Gauthier (2025) demonstrates that "restorying" is a transformative tool for empowerment, enabling individuals to break cycles of intergenerational trauma and reclaim their agency. Standardized Western metrics cannot measure educational success within the Echo phase; rather, it must be evaluated by how well practitioners and educators implement land-based, holistic approaches that nurture the emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions of learning.

Following the principles of Archibald's (2008) Indigenous Storywork and Gauthier's (2025) framework—which utilizes the Medicine Wheel as a guide to map journeys away from injustice toward a new future—the Echo ensures that the stories schools tell about Indigenous peoples are fundamentally transformed. Human reality is a narrative construct, and individuals possess the inherent agency to edit, modify, or rewrite dominant stories. In educational systems, this means editing out deeply embedded systemic biases, modifying institutional structures to share power equitably, and completely rewriting the curriculum to position Indigenous storytelling and knowledge systems as foundational methodologies for building a "good life" (*Mino-Bimaadiziwin*).

When the institution genuinely listens to the Echo, it enters into a balanced relationship with the community. The educational landscape is no longer a site of cognitive imperialism but a mirror in which the voices of the land, the students, and the ancestors are recognized, respected, and collectively carried forward into the next generation. Educators and leaders must be willing to pause, adapt, and respond to community feedback. The Echo therefore becomes the framework's accountability mechanism. It reminds educational systems that the next action must be shaped by what returns from students, families, communities, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and the Land itself.

Contributions of the Portfolio

This literature review provides the roots to the portfolio by supporting a literature-informed and Anishinaabe-grounded re-storying framework for addressing anti-Indigenous racism in education. Its contribution is not a completed implementation plan, an intervention study, or an evaluation of student outcomes. Rather, it offers a conceptual and applied foundation for future community-led work.

The portfolio contributes to Indigenous education by centering Miigiwewin and Miingweziwin as teachings that reframe knowledge, policy, pedagogy, and leadership as responsibilities of stewardship rather than ownership. It contributes to anti-racist education by naming anti-Indigenous racism as systemic and institutional, while avoiding simplistic causal claims about student outcomes. It contributes to practitioner inquiry by showing how an Indigenous education leader can use literature, public documents, approved materials, and reflection to develop ethically grounded tools for future work.

Through *The Listening*, *The Stillness*, *The Call*, and *The Echo*, the portfolio outlines a living framework for change. Listening requires confronting systemic inequities. Stillness demands critical reflection. The Call moves toward action. The Echo ensures ongoing accountability to community voice. Together, these movements resist static solutions and support continuous learning and adaptation.

This work calls educators and institutions to shift from control to stewardship and from authority to relational accountability. As the echo returns across the water, it reminds us that the work is cyclical. Each response shapes the next action, each story informs the next generation, and each act of giving contributes to a shared future. Re-storying education is not only about addressing past harms. It is also about creating a future grounded in truth, respect, reciprocity, and reconciliation, guided by the voices of community. Archibald (2008) explains that the power of storywork to make meaning derives from a synergy between the story, the context in which the story is used, the way that story is told, and how one listens to the story. This is true of this portfolio purpose: educational systems do not only need revised policies or new resources, they need a new story. The story must be grounded in truth, respect, reciprocity, relational accountability, and the voices of Indigenous students, families, communities, and Nations.

Conclusion

In this portfolio, re-storying becomes the ethical and pedagogical thread connecting literature, policy reflection, educator response, and critical self-reflection. Re-storying frameworks grounded in the Teachings of Miigiwewin (the act of giving) and Miingweziwin (Giving or Sharing of our Gifts) support educational systems in addressing anti-Indigenous racism. This literature review has demonstrated that addressing anti-Indigenous racism in education requires more than reform; it demands a fundamental re-storying of educational systems through an ongoing cycle of listening, stillness, calls and echoes.

At the centre of this cycle is the transformative responsibility of re-storying as an imperative for wholistic student well-being. When colonial narratives continue to dominate education, student well-being is compromised through cultural disconnect and layers of systemic racism. Rooted in Miigiwewin and Miingweziwin, re-storying transforms the educational climate into one where students' ancestral truths, languages, and identities are honoured as inherent strengths. Recognizing students through their gifts nurtures their emotional safety, spiritual grounding, and sense of belonging as the roots to wellbeing.

Education systems are shaped by the stories they choose to uphold. Through the movements of *The Listening*, *The Stillness*, *The Call*, and *The Echo*, this review has outlined a relational framework for change—one where listening confronts systemic inequities, stillness demands critical reflection, the call drives action, and the echo ensures ongoing accountability to community voice. At the centre of this cycle is the transformative responsibility of re-storying. As Johnson (2022) argued, "we are all story... [T]o change our circumstances, we need to change our story: edit it, modify it, or completely rewrite it" (pp. 11–12). Because these educational narratives are constructed, colonial stories that perpetuated harm can be changed into stories of truth, reconciliation, relationality, and collective well-being. Re-storying ultimately invites school communities into critical reflection (and recommendation) to take back harmful narratives of the past and speak into existence new ones that empower youth and echo community.

As the echo returns across the water, it reminds us that the work is cyclical. Each response shapes the next action, each story influences the next, and each act of giving contributes to a shared future. Re-storying education is not only about addressing past harms but about actively creating a future grounded in truth, respect, and reconciliation—one where the song is the echo of community.

Chapter 2: The Stillness — Re-Storying for Policy Guidelines

The Literature Review in Chapter 1 shared the Story of Maang and the framework that is, in essence, the first aspect of the framework—the Dive into the Listening. This chapter is the second aspect of the framework—the stillness. Of course, both parts are cyclical and interconnected as the framework is not a linear process; rather, it is a model of responsive, authentic, and meaningful ways of knowing for working together in education.

As described in Chapter 1 and reflected on more fully in Chapter 4, I approach this policy/guideline reflection as an educator, a Maang clan member with distinct community responsibilities, and an Indigenous Education Lead working in ethical relationality with First Nations communities, youth, families, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and school board structures. This chapter describes the Maang/Loon framework as it applies to selected policy and guideline areas connected to anti-Indigenous racism and Indigenous student well-being. It also emerges from my responsibilities as an Anishinaabe educator and leader working within school systems that continue to be shaped by colonial histories, policies, and practices while remaining attentive to the voices of students, families, communities, and educators who have identified anti-Indigenous racism as an urgent concern.

Miigiwewin (sacred giving) and *Miingweziwin* (the passing on of gifts) described in Chapter 1 (Literature Review) remain foundational concepts for the Maang/Loon Teaching and re-storying framework. These guidelines are written on Anishinaabek Territory, authored by Anishinaabe people and created in the context of supporting Anishinaabek Education moving forward.

This chapter remains part of the MEd portfolio and offers provisional applied groundwork; it does not represent full implementation or evaluation of the broader 2026–2027 project. It employs the Maang/Loon framework through policy review as part of a learning journey in re-storying. Within this work, re-storying is understood as a process of uprooting harmful institutional narratives, seeding more truthful and relational understandings, and nurturing educational responsibilities accountable to Indigenous students, families, communities, and Nations. In this chapter, the portfolio enters The Stillness: a careful pause for policy/guideline reflection shaped by community advice to focus on anti-Indigenous racism.

This policy/guideline reflection draws from working group meetings, community conversations, and the broader funded project described in Appendix A. The MEd portfolio does not evaluate that larger project or report on its outcomes. Instead, it uses these contexts to develop a provisional policy/guideline reflection that may inform future community-led review, revision, and implementation.

The joint proposal in Appendix A identifies policy and guideline areas for future review, including collaboration, co-creation, communication, commitments of northern Ontario school boards, self-identification, land acknowledgements, data, and data sovereignty. These areas are included here because they are relevant to Indigenous student well-being, board accountability, and future community-led policy development.

Future guideline development may include specialized positions such as Indigenous graduation coaches, support workers, and instructional leads; Indigenous youth spaces; curriculum pathways; and commitments to Anishinaabemowin programming. Future guideline development may also include Indigenous days of recognition and cultural rights, such as smudging and tobacco use, in both Indigenous Education and Equity/Human Rights guidelines.

Future work may also need to examine human resources policies, including Indigenous recruitment and retention, hiring practices, representation, duty to consult, Indigenous identification and verification, and leadership pathways for Indigenous staff. These areas require a larger circle that includes unions, human resources specialists, Indigenous staff, and community partners. Community and working group conversations have also identified concerns about racism affecting Indigenous educators' well-being, belonging, and safety within provincial education systems.

Seema/tobacco and circle protocols have guided this work and will continue to guide the broader project. Knowledge and wisdom offered through community processes are shared here only in general terms. In future stages, the working group will seek guidance and permission about when, where, and how names, direct quotations, or individual voices may be used.

Aspects of Chapter 2 may move forward to the Anti-Indigenous Racism Working Group and relevant advisory circles for future review. Any future revision, approval, or implementation will be determined through community and board processes beyond the scope of the MEd portfolio.

As outlined in Appendix A, the broader project includes its own outcomes and evaluation processes. Within this MEd portfolio, however, the emphasis remains on provisional policy/guideline reflection, relational accountability, and the careful connection between recommended changes and deeper learning about anti-Indigenous racism.

Appendix B provides a draft example of an Indigenous Education guideline resource. It is organized by explaining a recommended change, connecting that change to anti-Indigenous racism, and offering a quotation, reading, reflective question, or task for educator learning. It is included as a provisional resource for future community and board review rather than as a final policy document.

This situation is considered quite urgent by the communities. One Chief/Ogimaa from the region has taken on a leadership role in supporting education, and the other leaders in the region have given Ogimaa authority to represent shared educational concerns. Five Nations in the region are under an Education Service Agreement or a Reciprocal Education Agreement. Ogimaa has publicly opposed racism and increased board accountability. In May 2026, Ogimaa shared that provincial education has many systemic issues and that too much time has passed without real change. Issues harming student success and well-being continue to increase, including Indigenous racism. Ogimaa also shared that communities are seeking educational autonomy and sovereignty and that there is movement toward creating an Anishinabek K-12 regional school. One community already has a thriving K-8 program, and another has a K-4 program, so a shared K-12 educational system is a meaningful next step in honour of Mino-Bimaadiziwin. I acknowledge and thank Ogimaa for sitting with the working group as a Knowledge Keeper and leader.

The broader 2026–2027 funded project will determine whether, how, and in what form these draft tools are revised, approved, or implemented through community and board processes. The MEd portfolio itself develops the conceptual, methodological, and provisional applied groundwork. I will ensure that the final version of the “Uprooting Anti-Indigenous Racism”, Niigaan Gdizhaami Initiative Outcomes are shared with the portfolio review committee to bring the research full circle.

Chapter 3: The Call — Re-Storying Relational Response Guide

This chapter offers a provisional re-storying relational response guide for educators and administrators. Corresponding to The Call in the Maang/Loon framework, the guide invites educators into relational accountability by translating the literature review and policy reflection into guiding principles, reflective prompts, and considerations for future community-led use.

This chapter does not claim that the relational response guide will improve attendance statistics or evaluate student outcomes. Rather, it treats cultural absence as one applied site where institutional racism, cultural safety, school policy, colonial calendars, family/community responsibilities, and educator assumptions may intersect.

In Chapter 2, recommendations were established for dedicated Indigenous Education board guidelines as well as updates to existing policy housed primarily under the board's equity frameworks. Chapter 3 explores one vital aspect of those recommendations: cultural absences. This focus is grounded in the understanding that colonial systems have often required Indigenous students to adjust to institutional structures rather than requiring institutions to respond to Indigenous knowledge, rights, and community responsibilities. Drawing on LeMay (2025), this chapter emphasizes flexibility, community wisdom, and relational accountability over bureaucratic compliance. It offers provisional recommendations for review by Indigenous Advisory Circles and for possible future use in the 2026–2027 community-led project.

The student voice shared in this chapter is presented in generalized, anonymized, and approved terms. No individual student, school, or community is identified. Any direct phrase included here is used only where I have permission and responsibility to carry it forward.

At one northern Ontario school board, the Indigenous Youth Advisory Circle (IYC) identified Indigenous racism as an urgent issue. The issue was explored through sharing circles, an Anishinaabe communication protocol rooted in equality, respect, responsibility, relationship, and relationality. A talking stick, stone, or feather is passed to ensure that each person's voice is honoured. The person holding the item speaks without interruption while others practice deep, active listening. Youth requested that the circle include only Indigenous education leads, creating an Indigenous-only space for safer sharing. It was agreed that ideas from the circles could be shared in general terms, with no student, school, group, or individual identified. The Indigenous

Youth Trustee later brought student voice to trustees, executive council, and senior leadership, with support from the Indigenous Education Leads.

Students shared many stories about what supports student success and well-being. They expressed gratitude for Indigenous youth rooms, Indigenous graduation coaches, Indigenous transition and support workers, Anishinaabemowin programs, Indigenous Studies programs, Elders-in-residence, school-community powwows, mentorship programs, arts-based learning, and land-based learning.

Students also shared that provincial education systems can be challenging, difficult, and harmful. Their concerns included academic issues, support issues, community engagement issues, and experiences of anti-Indigenous racism. For the purposes of this portfolio, the focus is on how educators can respond to the student voice related to anti-Indigenous racism and cultural absence. The student voice process represented multiple meetings over the 2025-2026 school year. Much of this information was shared at the Indigenous Education Advisory Circle and documented in board minutes; however, the depth and urgency of the student concerns were not fully reflected in the formal record or subsequent system response. This student voice process will continue in the 2026-2027 school year.

The board did take some actions in response to student voice. During the school year, the board held full-staff professional development with an Indigenous speaker and anti-racism advocate, invested in initiatives and special projects with dedicated resources, and partnered with a provincial organization and local First Nations to develop a multifaceted approach. This is a long journey, but these actions represent a beginning. Three themes from the student voice process are especially relevant for educator learning:

1. Educators need to deepen their understanding of microaggressions, including how to recognize them and how to support youth who experience them.
2. Students would benefit from focused learning on allyship and on how to respond when they witness racism.
3. Educators need to understand the invisible “cultural tax” Indigenous students may carry when they spend significant time navigating microaggressions, prejudice, and racism. Over time, this burden can affect student well-being and educational experience.

One issue within the immediate sphere of educator and administrator influence is the honouring of cultural absences. For many Anishinabek students, cultural learning opportunities

do not follow the school-year calendar. Hunting season was identified repeatedly as one example. Students described the unfairness of having to choose between land-based learning with Knowledge Keepers and success in school. When these absences are not properly recorded as approved, when learning on the land is not recognized, or when students are required to “catch up” without support, cultural learning can become a source of penalty rather than affirmation. In this way, school practices may disadvantage students who are exercising cultural responsibilities and inherent rights.

Recent provincial policy directions, including the Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026 (Bill 101), place renewed emphasis on attendance, participation, standardized assessment, and common instructional resources. These directions raise important equity and human rights questions for Indigenous students whose cultural, ceremonial, and land-based learning responsibilities may not align with the provincial school calendar. For this reason, school boards and educators need clear guidance for understanding cultural absences through human rights, Indigenous rights, relational accountability, and culturally responsive assessment practices.

Although Ontario’s public school calendar is framed as a secular administrative structure, it continues to reflect Eurocentric and Christian norms, including extended breaks around Christmas and the Western New Year. Indigenous students whose cultural, ceremonial, or land-based responsibilities fall outside this calendar must often seek accommodation for absences that are tied to identity, community, and rights.

Several legal and policy frameworks support the respectful accommodation of cultural absences, including the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC), Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, Master Education Agreements and Education Service Agreements, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC) Calls to Action. Together, these frameworks require school systems to consider Indigenous cultural, ceremonial, and land-based learning responsibilities as rights-bearing educational realities rather than discretionary absences.

Under the OHRC, school boards must accommodate creed-based observances to the point of undue hardship. Section 35 recognizes and affirms existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, which may include harvesting practices. Master Education Agreements and Education Service Agreements also require educational delivery to respect First Nations governance, culture, and learning modalities. UNDRIP affirms Indigenous peoples’ rights to education, culture, language,

and self-determination, while the TRC Calls to Action call on educational systems to support Indigenous knowledge, language, culture, and reconciliation.

In northeastern Ontario, the timing of hunting and harvesting varies by species, local ecological conditions, community knowledge, and family responsibilities. For example, black bear, moose, deer, bow hunting, and migratory bird harvesting may occur at different points from September through November. Because these timelines are shaped by local knowledge and seasonal conditions, cultural absences cannot always be predicted far in advance. These land-based learning opportunities and family traditions frequently fall within the standard school term, making proper accreditation, accommodation, and absence recording essential. Local knowledge is essential.

Inviting Educators into Allyship and the Re-Storying Framework:

Educators are invited to step into a re-storying framework: to listen deeply to student voices, learn in stillness about the colonial calendar and its ongoing impacts, and accept the call to uproot false narratives so new ones may take seed and grow. Through positionality and relationality, educators hold responsibilities and opportunities to make more respectful, responsive decisions for students. Stories have always shaped, and will continue to shape, the landscape of education. The critical questions we must confront are: Whose stories are told? Whose stories are silenced? Which stories inflict harm, and which stories foster truth and reconciliation? Which stories are elevated as fact, and which are dismissed as fiction?

Drawing on Johnson's (2022) understanding of story as something that can be revised and retold, educators are invited to examine the stories their policies, calendars, assessment practices, and classroom responses communicate to Indigenous students and families. A long time ago, settlers told a story—repeatedly, loudly, and with enough volume that its echoes continue to reverberate across educational institutions today. Those colonial narratives told a story of European supremacy and Indigenous erasure. To transform education, educators must help uproot those stories and participate in changing the story: editing, modifying, and rewriting it. This portfolio serves as a direct call to action, inviting educators to engage in the ongoing work of unlearning and relearning, uprooting anti-Indigenous racism while seeding and nourishing new stories rooted in relationality and truth.

As LeMay (2025) asserts, “allyship is an action, a continuous, intentional effort to disrupt colonial norms and redistribute power built in the quiet, unglamorous, daily work” (p. 18). By

listening with humility, adapting institutional structures to honour cultural lifeways, and recognizing land-based learning as rigorous scholarship, educators become part of the Echo—transforming allyship from a static concept into an active, everyday practice of equity and relational truth.

The guide invites educators to support students through four areas of practice identified through sharing circles and advisory circles:

1. Educators honour cultural learning through credit.
2. Semester planning to best support known cultural absences
3. Miigiwewin & Miingweziwin: Curriculum Experts
4. Supportive Communication and Collaboration

1. Educators honour cultural learning through credit.

Under the Ontario Ministry of Education’s assessment framework, *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools* (2010), teachers have both the pedagogical and legal authority to evaluate student learning based on curriculum expectations rather than the physical location where that learning occurs. Student learning can be demonstrated through observations, conversations, and/or products. When a student engages in a Land-based cultural experience, such as hunting, seasonal harvesting, or ceremony, they actively develop and apply high-level competencies across all curriculum areas.

Re-storying education requires dismantling the idea that Indigenous perspectives belong only in specialized or segregated units. As Johnson (2022) reminded us, "we are in a new age, and we need a new story... that tries to be more complete and doesn't leave anybody out" (p. 28). This vision is both accessible and profound: teachers do not need to create standalone courses to honour this knowledge. Instead, they can map authentic, land-based experiences directly to existing overall expectations within any subject area, honouring the fundamental truth that it is all connected. By grounding curriculum mapping in local knowledge and co-designing assessment plans with students, families, communities, and support persons, educators build a living, holistic curriculum.

An Anishinabek student, with an “excused absence” to participate in cultural learning, can fulfill curriculum expectations. In a seasonal harvest, for example, science curricular expectations around ecosystem sustainability and biodiversity, geography expectations regarding land stewardship and resource management, and health expectations focused on physical well-

being and community connectivity are obtained. English curricular expectations can be met through the mode of delivery, and mathematics can be built into every harvesting task. This is an authentic demonstration and real-world application of learning with reflection. Proper mapping of overall expectations and assessment for any curriculum subject needs to honour Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy (CRRP), empowering Indigenous youth in their educational experience.

2. Semester planning to best support known cultural absences

Semester planning requires educators to design course schedules around known cultural seasons intentionally. Hunting and harvesting cultural learning are at different times based on where you are on the lands now known as Ontario. Local knowledge is essential for this planning. Indigenous students' academic progress must be supported through proactive planning. The scheduling of summative evaluations, unit tests, or critical assignments should be planned accordingly. Overall or specific expectations can align with cultural learning where possible, and allow for Indigenous knowledge to be shared with all students by amplifying Indigenous voices through resources, literature, and community voice. This course mapping honours students' rights to participate in cultural practices.

Teachers hold a unique role as creative collaborators and facilitators in learning journeys. Within this role, educators possess the professional autonomy to make transformative pedagogical decisions—such as fully supporting students who need to be absent from school to participate in their culture. As Johnson (2022) reminds us, "all stories can be told in multiple ways... We go back over our life story and rewrite it. We retell it in new, better ways, healing ways" (p. 18). When teachers choose empathy, understanding and flexibility over typical semester structures in order to honour cultural commitments, they become active allies.

3. Miigwewin & Miingweziwin: Curriculum Experts

As curriculum and subject matter experts, educators have specialized knowledge in the courses they teach. Educators are invited, as active allies, to use their expertise to uproot harmful narratives and nourish transformative ways of thinking, knowing, and doing. Educators are asked to critically reflect on how their specific subjects have historically marginalized or excluded Indigenous epistemologies. Then, educators are invited to find ways, within the same discipline, to amplify Indigenous voices, knowledge, and ways of knowing. The amplification of Indigenous stories and the honouring of land-based cultural learning are shared responsibilities

across all curriculum areas. Practical enactment of this vision requires intentionality: science educators can bring forward Traditional Ecological Knowledge, language arts teachers can centre Indigenous authors, and social science teachers can ground learning in local land relationships, treaties, and Indigenous sovereignty. Grounding this practice is the understanding that “allyship requires courage. It means stepping up when it is inconvenient, taking personal responsibility for equity, and ensuring that our systems do not continue to penalize Indigenous youth for holding fast to who they are” (LeMay, 2025, p. 87). Through this continuous process of listening, learning, and sharing, educators move beyond symbolic gestures into active reconciliation.

This choice supports all learners. Indigenous youth see their identity and sovereignty affirmed, while non-Indigenous students are invited into knowledge, understanding, and relational accountability as settlers today. Educators are asked to share their gifts on this shared path.

4. Supportive Communication and Collaboration

Educators are asked to practice deep, humble listening and foster transparent, reciprocal communication with students, families, and community members. To map curriculum and semesters appropriately, educators need to understand students’ cultural experiences and the local knowledge that shapes those experiences. When educators understand the need for approved absences for cultural learning, they can support the process holistically. This includes ensuring that absences are properly requested and recorded so students are not penalized, and working alongside graduation coaches, support workers, or designated First Nation education representatives to support communication with families. As LeMay (2025) has argued, deep listening is not passive; it is an active unlearning of the need to control outcomes and a willingness to be changed by what Indigenous communities share.

As with Chapter 2, this guide is provisional. Any future use, revision, or implementation will be determined through the Anti-Indigenous Racism Working Group and relevant advisory circles.

As LeMay (2025) emphasizes, meaningful allyship requires non-Indigenous allies to manage the discomfort of truth, unlearn systemic biases, and use their positionality and influence responsibly. I acknowledge and thank educators and educational leaders who engage in this learning journey alongside First Nation communities to transform school experiences and support every learner’s achievement and well-being.

This chapter establishes a foundational starting point for a guide addressing the urgent need to honour and accommodate cultural absences within provincial education systems. While transforming macro-level structures remains a long-term goal, these considerations can inform classroom and school-level practice while remaining subject to future community review, revision, and implementation processes. As this work moves toward completion and submission to the portfolio review committee, it remains grounded in the wisdom that “it’s your story, your journey. You are a good storyteller; you can take the plot from here forward and create your masterpiece” (Johnson, 2022, p. 124).

Chapter 4: The Echo — Critical Reflection

This chapter is a self-reflection that I offer with humility. It is a set of reflections of why I chose this portfolio, what I learned through the process of researching and creating the portfolio, what remains unresolved, and how the work will continue ethically in the broader 2026–2027 project. This reflection is from the lens of my identity and responsibilities as an Anishinaabe Kwe and educator, mother, Loon clan member, Indigenous Education Lead, and practitioner-scholar. I reflect on the Maang teachings, Miingweziwin and Miigiwewin philosophy, as well as my experience with academia.

At the start of the literature review, I introduced myself, sharing some of my background, including that I belong to the Loon clan with gifts and responsibilities from Teme-Augama Anishinabek. My clan (*Maangodasawe*) has specific roles as leaders, strategists, and speakers. The Loon Clan aspires to wisdom, strong decision-making, and the ability to articulate the needs of the peoples—as our story shares these responsibilities. N'Daki Menan, or what we call our homeland of Teme-Augama Anishinabek (Deep Water People), is a sacred place. As a member of the Loon clan, this role makes me responsible to the ancestors and future generations who call on us to do good work for our people and give us the guidance to do so.

The Echo, in this context of reflection, is exactly what an echo stands for. It represents accountability, lived experience, and commitment to amplifying community voice. My Echo returns me to the interactive cyclical process as re-storying is to enact Miingweziwin and Miigiwewin.

The work I engaged in through Lakehead University's Master of Education (MEd) program was deeply meaningful. At the same time that I began this degree, I was also moving through several years of significant life change. It was the most challenging time of my life and re-storying my work through the MEd degree found me again. This wholistic framework became a way of life. This philosophy created a space for me to be my best self professionally and personally as I rewrote my own story. Now, I invite others to be part of that re-storying. As wholistic theory suggests, we bring our whole selves into academic, professional, and educational work as it is all interconnected.

Many years ago, as we do as Anishinaabe people, we consult our community and Elders before we take roles that represent our people. When I asked my Elders if I should accept the role as Indigenous Education Lead, a story was shared with me:

“Imagine a forest: large trees, bushes, bold rock cliffs and swampy lands. You are trying to get through this, creating a path for your people to the other side.

You could use a blade, cut everything down, force a path. When you look back on your path, you will see overturned stones, broken tree branches and crushed flowers and foliage. You may be exhausted, out of breath, cut, bruised from the sheer fight against the hard path.

Many have had to cut a path this way.

Or, you can use your feather. You will dance up and over the stones, gently pulling back limbs of trees, careful not to crush the strawberry flowers. You will hum and sing songs as your breath is even and calm. It will take a long time. You will look back on this path and barely even see a path. You will still have the same scars; they will be inside, not as visible. You will just find yourself on the other side.”

(Retold from an Elder, Temagami First Nation, 2011)

I believe that this is what re-storying is meant to do—not undo harms with more harms but to address these difficulties with grace. I have kept this teaching with me for many years as it is a story I often share with those trying to do brave work in social justice, especially relevant and powerful in education. I also believe that it is what the Maang teaching offers.

This teaching helps explain why re-storying matters. It also helps me explain why I chose to focus on anti-racism. I chose to focus on anti-racism for both professional and personal reasons. The professional reasons are explained in Chapter 2. My personal reasons are grounded in lived experience and in my hopes for my own children. My mother comes from a family with Métis identity and Irish ancestry, while my late father was First Nation (Anishinaabe). Because of my appearance and family relations, I have moved through the world in ways that made visible how differently Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are treated in northern Ontario. I experienced the world differently depending on who I was with. As a teenager and young adult, I saw repeated differences in the treatment of my Indigenous friends and family compared with non-Indigenous friends and family when I was in public spaces such as malls, events, restaurants, and bars. Sadly, the same experiences and observations were true as an adult. Often, settlers did not realize they were in mixed company, and I would often hear directly what settlers thought about First Nations peoples. Even now 10 years post the Truth & Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, I personally experience microaggressions in a variety of forms.

As a parent, this has been especially difficult as I want things to be better for my children and future generations.

In addition, the youth groups I have worked with often come to me in tears, sharing their experiences. Community has advised the school board of this urgent need. Staff have gone on leave or left the system from experiencing different aspects of racism. As Anishinaabe people, who we are is what we do. This is our story. Wholistic. Interconnected, Relational.

Through this portfolio, I came to understand more clearly that my contribution is not a finished solution, but a relational offering: a framework, draft tools, and a commitment to continue the work with humility and accountability.

Centring Miigwewin, Miingweziwin, and the Maang framework has deepened my learning and may support meaningful future change through community-led work. However, the completion of this portfolio is not without its challenges.

Attempting to work at the same capacity and skill level as I did prior to a medical diagnosis and ongoing treatments has been both frustrating and humbling. Fatigue, malaise, and insomnia plague all work. However, at the same time, I have never had so much clarity, resolve, resilience, or artistic ability. The spiritual aspect of myself has never been stronger. Ceremony and time on my ancestral lands have become my most valued “education”, occurring simultaneously to this MEd learning journey.

In addition, attempting to merge real-time work with the expectations of the portfolio was challenging. Community work, educational mandates and academic expectations can grow together, but require careful preparation and care. However challenging, I truly came to appreciate and value the process and outcomes of this merging.

I also realize my gift is not in academia or academic writing or publishing. I deeply love learning, but my gifts are in supporting circles, communities, and bridge work between systems and Indigenous communities for systemic change. I am a storyteller and artist, but in a different way than would be defined as conventional academic success. This portfolio was the most difficult aspect of my entire degree in that way. Looking back, I would have preferred finding a method of sharing my experience more in tune with my gifts; however, I am glad to have challenged myself.

In addition, I had difficulty creating the portfolio because of the wealth of Indigenous academic scholarship, education law and policies, stories, community voice, and the sheer

number of urgent incidents, all while honouring the mandates from the community to support the uprooting of anti-Indigenous racism. These elements, their prioritization, and their cohesive alignment were a consistent challenge. However, this brought me an incredible amount of knowledge and understanding moving forward in this work.

The most evident challenge was the amount of time in reading, writing, and research in the creation of the portfolio, and all the associated work that was not included in this portfolio. The learning, many hours of work and dozens of community circles continuing this work are not reflected in the overview and four chapters here. I had to reduce the portfolio's scope, over and over again, for the final MEd portfolio. However, the work completed around this portfolio that is not included has been saved and will be used for the ongoing initiative during the 2026/2027 school year, so it was time well spent.

In addition, I often found myself frustrated, as I know more than I can ever articulate through this method of academic writing. There is so much more I would have wanted to include and create, and selecting and changing those selections created a lengthy process. I found myself constantly questioning this output and my path. This challenge gave me new appreciation for academic writing and the research process. I leave this process with humility, in awe of academic scholarship, especially Indigenous academic scholarship, walking in two worlds and finding balance between fundamentally different ways of knowing.

This portfolio was designed for meaningful and authentic professional use, to support change in the system. I feel a deep urgency in this work for this change, as I will be leaving the provincial system soon. I have a plan to live in my own community full time and work exclusively with Anishinabek Nations as an educator and artist. This portfolio marks the end of my educational accreditation journey. My career path and aspirations have shifted, as often happens following life-changing events. Instead, I am enthusiastic, energized, and excited for my next chapter based in community, arts and cultural learning and ceremony rather than mainstream education.

References

- Absolon, K. (2010). Indigenous wholistic theory: A knowledge set for practice. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 5(2), 74–87.
- Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenoustorywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. UBC Press.
- Archibald, J. (2023). Hands back, hands forward: Expanding the circle of Indigenous storyworkers. *Bank Street Occasional Paper Series*, 2023(49), Article 8.
<https://doi.org/10.58295/2375-3668.1481>
- Barkaskas, P., & Gladwin, D. (2021). Pedagogical talking circles: Decolonizing education through relational Indigenous frameworks. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 15(1), 20–38.
- Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit*. Purich Publishing.
- Benton-Banai, E. (1988). *The Mishomis book: The voice of the Ojibway*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Brant, J. (2022). Lessons from our sweetgrass baskets: A wholistic vision of academic success for Indigenous women in higher education. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 52(4), 27–40.
- Chrona, J. (2022). *Wayi Wah! Indigenous pedagogies: An act for reconciliation and anti-racist education*. Portage & Main Press.
- Curtice, K. B. (2025). *Everything is a story*. Brazos Press.

- de Leeuw, S., Cameron, E. S., & Greenwood, M. L. (2012). Participatory and community-based research, Indigenous geographies, and the spaces of friendship: A critical engagement. *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien*, 56(2), 180–194.
- Dion, S. D. (2016). Mediating the space between: voices of Indigenous youth and voices of educators in service of reconciliation. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 53(4), 468–473.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12128>
- Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. (2023, December). *Going beyond a land acknowledgement* [PDF]. ETFO First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education.
<https://etfofnmi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Going-Beyond-A-Land-Acknowledgement-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>
- Gaudry, A., & Lorenz, D. (2018). Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 14(3), 218–227.
- Gauthier, M. (2025). *Restorying your story: Reclaiming your voice in the face of past injustice*. Page Two Books.
- Gillies, C. (2023). Anti-Indigenous deficit racism and cultural essentialism in K–12 education: We want you to recognize there's a problem. *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry*, 10(2), 68–88.
- Halton District School Board. (n.d.). *Indigenous education policy* [PDF].
<https://www.hdsb.ca/media/2cwm2glr/indigenous-education-policy.pdf>

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. (2026, May). *Indigenous education policy* (Policy No. 6.6) [PDF]. https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2026-05/POL-6.6_Indigenous-Education-1.pdf

Hampton, E., & St. Denis, V. (2002). *Literature review on racism and the effects on Aboriginal education*—Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Johnson, H. R. (2022). *The power of story: On truth, the trickster, and new fictions for a new era*. Biblioasis.

Kinoomaadziwin Education Body. (n.d.). *Niigaaniin -Keb Services NextGen Fund*. Anishinabek Education System. Retrieved August 01, 2026, from <https://aes-keb.com/ng-fund/>

Leddy, S., & Miller, L. (2024). *Teaching where you are: Weaving Indigenous and slow principles and pedagogies*. University of Toronto Press.

LeMay, R. (2025). *Ally is a verb: A guide to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples*. Page Two Books.

Maracle, L. (2011). *Ravensong*. Canadian Scholars' Press.

Meyer Furrey, G. (2024). Pedagogical and strategic blind spots: Critical and Indigenous theories of education in dialogue. *Policy Futures in Education*.

Mskokii Peltier, S. M. (2021). Anishinaabewin: An epistemological and research method framework. In *Sustaining Indigenous Languages* (pp. 49–62).

Near North District School Board. (n.d.-a). *Board and trustee committee meetings*. Retrieved August 01, 2026, from <https://www.nearnorthschools.ca/board/board-and-trustee-committee-meetings/>

Near North District School Board. (n.d.-b). *Indigenous education*. Retrieved August 01, 2026, from <https://www.nearnorthschools.ca/programs/indigenous-education>

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2010). *Growing success: Assessment, evaluation, and reporting in Ontario schools*. Queen's Printer for Ontario.
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/growSuccess.pdf>

Peltier, C. (2018). An application of Two-Eyed Seeing: Indigenous research methods with participatory action research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918812346>

Peltier, S. M., & Huber, J. (2026). Grounding elementary social studies teacher education in Indigenous knowledge. *LEARNing Landscapes*, 30, 195–216.
<https://doi.org/10.36510/ft9w2x47>

Persaud, J. N., et al. (2025). Decolonizing education: Advancing Indigenous student success through culturally responsive practice in Ontario. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 21(2).

Roberts, C. (2024). *Re-storying education: Decolonizing your practice using a critical lens*. Page Two Books.

Sockbeson, R. (2017). Maine Indigenous education left behind: A call for anti-racist conviction as political will toward decolonization. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 56(1), 105–123. <https://doi.org/10.5749/jamerindieduc.56.1.0105>

St. Denis, V. (2007). Aboriginal education and anti-racist education: Building alliances across cultural and racial identity. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30(4), 1068–1092. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20466679>

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to action*. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

United Nations. (2013). *Know your rights! UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: A guide for Indigenous adolescents* [PDF]. Native American Rights Fund. <https://un-declaration.narf.org/wp-content/uploads/un-adolescents-guide2013.pdf>

Wagamese, R. (2011). *One story, one song*. Douglas & McIntyre.

Appendix A

The Anishinabek Education System (AES) is a culturally-driven, self-governing education system that gives participating First Nations authority over education. The Kinoomaadziwin Education Body (KEB) serves as its central administrative branch to manage operations and funding. They implement the Niigaan Gdizhaami (NG) Fund, a dedicated grant initiative that supports community-led projects focused on preserving Anishinaabe language, historical knowledge, and student well-being. This appendix serves as an example of community work. More information about the system, education body, initiatives, and application guidelines can be accessed through the official [Kinoomaadziwin Education Body \(KEB\)Website](#). To keep the focus on the issue rather than on one school board, region, or administrative context, identifying details have been removed. Letters of support from all partners were obtained in May 2026

Niigaan Gdizhaami Fund Joint Proposal

1. PROPOSED PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Increasing knowledge and understanding of Anishinabek histories, cultures, perspectives, languages, and contributions (“Bimaadziwin”) and traditional Anishinaabe knowledge passed down from one generation to the next through ceremonial teachings (“Kendaaswin”).

Summarize how your project will address this priority area:

Using the Seven Grandfather Teachings/Gifts through the ongoing Seven Grandfathers First campaign, this framework and action plan will address anti-Indigenous racism systemically. Utilizing a 'storying' framework to centre Bimaadziwin and Kendaaswin as foundational educational pedagogies, we can ensure the entire school community supports anti-racism. Through a process of relational accountability, this work will facilitate a systemic shift where Anishinabek ways of knowing are centred. Ultimately, this project aims to 'uproot' racism by replacing systemic erasure with a lived, culturally specific pedagogy that honours Anishinaabe ways of knowing.

Enhanced opportunities for the engagement and participation of Anishinabek students, families, and communities to support Anishinabek student success and well-being.

Summarize how your project will address this priority area:

This framework and action plan centre relational accountability, supporting community-led narrative sovereignty. By centring Anishinabek students, families, community and approved resources as the primary authors of the 're-storying' process, the project ensures that the educational environment reflects the lived realities and aspirations of the community.

Creating intentional spaces for Kendaaswin (traditional knowledge) to flow directly from community into the system's processes, guidelines, communications, curriculum, and leadership. This approach recognizes that Anishinabek student success is inextricably linked to a sense of belonging and cultural safety. By fostering an ecosystem where families are active partners in uprooting systemic biases, we move toward an evergreen school community at all levels, where identity and well-being are strongly rooted.

Facilitating the successful transition of students between Anishinabek First Nations' schools and schools in the Provincially-Funded Education System.

Summarize how your project will address this priority area:

This framework and action plan address the transition between Anishinabek First Nations' schools and the provincial system by establishing a framework of Pedagogical Continuity. School transition will be a reciprocal process.

Our work focuses on preparing the provincially-funded system to receive, validate, and value the knowledge, culture and language that students bring from their home communities.

By utilizing a 'Re-storying' approach, this framework and action plan seek to harmonize the narrative environments of both systems, ensuring positive student transitions. Uprooting the systemic barriers will ensure Anishinabek students feel their identity is honoured.

Innovation and introduction of leading practices in Indigenous education.

Summarize how your project will address this priority area:

This framework and action plan are rooted in 'Re-storying' as a systemic leadership methodology rather than a singular curriculum tool. Our work centres on First Nation stories and frameworks as the primary architecture for educational reform. It amplifies First Nations' voices.

We will uproot Racism by inviting non-Indigenous educators, students, and the community into a shared story, a new narrative. We will support First Nations educators, students, and communities through our uprooting and healing, learning to stop harmful narratives and shout out new ones, truthful ones. Re-Story, Reset, Re-Frame, Re-learn and Restore.

Supporting collaboration between the AES and School Boards, including data and information sharing.

Summarize how your project will address this priority area:

This framework and action plan address the collaboration between the Anishinabek Education System (AES) and School Boards by establishing a framework of Ethical Space and Relational Data Sovereignty. 'Re-storying' is a collaborative methodology to ensure that data and information are interpreted through an Anishinabek lens of student well-being and success.

The participating First Nation communities have a right to control how their information is collected, used, and shared. The NNDSB role is that of supportive partners. It is the intention of the working group to share any findings with the KEB.

Production of a resource which will be shared with the Participating First Nation communities within the Anishinabek Education System.

Summarize how your project will address this priority area:

This framework and action plan will culminate in the production of a high-quality, accessible resource. Moving beyond a standard report, this resource serves as an 'Evergreen Document of Re-storying,' synthesizing the project's findings into a practical toolkit for community-led educational advocacy and cultural continuity. The document will address very specific issues as outlined by the working group.

By utilizing a Relational Accountability framework, the resource ensures that the insights gained from the project are returned to the community in a way that is respectful, useful, and culturally resonant. It will feature the integration of Kendaaswin (traditional knowledge) and local narratives, providing a blueprint for how families and community leaders can continue to uproot systemic racism within their local school environments.

We envision active discussions/presentations with communities, students, staff and administration [REDACTED]

2.PROJECT SUMMARY

Provide a synopsis of the project. Include: the need for the project, activities to be undertaken, and the expected outcomes/results to be achieved.

To effectively uproot anti-Indigenous racism, the educational landscape must shift from an 'additive' approach to Indigenous content toward a foundational practice of **re-storying**. By utilizing First Nation frameworks as the primary lens for knowledge construction, educators can disrupt the (decolonize) cognitive imperialism inherent in Western curricula, processes, communication and guidelines. Re-storying is not merely a teaching tool, but a necessity for uprooting racism and is needed for Anishinabek students' well-being and success.

Miigiwewin describes the act of giving. In a spiritual context, it describes the sacred gifts. Miigiwewin is an acknowledgement of interconnectedness and reciprocity. It is an understanding of inherent gifts and teachings. Giving is considered a way to honour yourself, others and the Creator. By sharing, you acknowledge that you are participating in the stewardship of the gift, not its ownership. Miingweziwin "Passing on, Giving, Sharing of our Gifts, such as the seven Grandfather Teachings.

We will employ an intentional, authentic and meaningful “re-storying” framework and concepts of Miigiwewin and Miingweziwin as Indigenous pedagogical frameworks. We will address anti-racism through reconciliation in education, by first and foremost acknowledging that racism occurs at all levels, every day within the school board “system”. Deconstruct, Reconstruct.

We have established an Anti-Indigenous Racism Working Group. This group consists of educational representatives from the Five First Nation Communities that send students to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Our group intends to create a framework and action plan to uproot racism.

Through our re-storying framework and action plan, we will:

- Promote Systemic Change and create recommendations for policy development or revisions
- Increase community engagement, amplify First Nation voice, and create a formal anti-racism working group
- Support educators as partners in this learning journey
- Support students as partners in this learning journey.
- Use data to support student well-being and achievement.

The framework: An outline:

- First Nation Pedagogies, Story & Re-storying
- Background, Purpose and Rationale
- Research, Inquiry design, Methodology, Methods, Ethics

- Summary of Tasks
- Timelines
- References

Context of the Project: (describe why this Project is needed. What will this Project accomplish? This sets the stage for your Project):

In the [redacted] region, an urgent need has been identified to address systemic exclusion and increase culturally responsive pedagogy to address anti-Indigenous racism, impacting the mental, spiritual, and academic well-being of Anishinabek students. This program will act as a litmus test for expansion into other regions. Our story is their story too.

The Framework: Re-Storying through Miigwewin and Miingweziwin

At the heart of this initiative is the practice of re-storying. This is not simply a new teaching tool, but a restorative process that places First Nation frameworks at the centre of knowledge construction. By utilizing the concepts of Miigwewin (the sacred gift/reciprocity) and Miingweziwin (the sharing of inherent gifts and the Seven Grandfather Teachings), we shift the school culture from one of "ownership" and "authority" to one of stewardship and interconnectedness.

This framework and action plan will be overseen by the Anti-Indigenous Racism Working Group, with educational representatives from the five First Nation communities that send students to Parry Sound High School. Together, we will co-create a framework and action plan.

By grounding our pedagogy in Anishinabek frameworks, we will uproot the foundations of racism and cultivate a space where every student can thrive through the recognition of their inherent gifts.

Need(s) for the Project:

This project is needed to address the ongoing impacts of anti-Indigenous racism within the education system, which continue to affect the well-being, identity, and academic success of Anishinabek students. In the [redacted] region, there is a clear need for meaningful change.

Anti-Indigenous education is essential because racism exists not only in individual actions but also within institutional systems and practices. When these are not addressed, they can negatively impact student confidence, identity, well-being, and academic achievement. For Anishinabek students, culturally disconnected learning environments can lead to disengagement and barriers to success.

This project responds by centring re-storying, using Anishinabek frameworks such as Miigwewin (reciprocity) and Miingweziwin (sharing of gifts), to reshape teaching and learning. This approach creates a more inclusive, respectful, and relational educational environment.

When students see their identities, cultures, and ways of knowing reflected in their learning, they are more engaged, confident, and successful. Anti-Indigenous education strengthens relationships, supports well-being, and creates school environments where all students can thrive.

Project Activities to Address Identified Need(s):

The working group will determine specific action items, meetings, events and initiatives. We ask that you submit this aspect of the application once this co-creation/consultation process occurs. The working group intends to:

- Creation of frameworks to uproot anti-Indigenous racism
- Creation of an Indigenous Education Policy

Target Audience:

- The schools of the Near North District School Board
- educators
- students
- Community
- Administration

Project Outputs (products or services, if applicable):

The **Project Outputs** are these products and services, designed to move the framework from theory into systemic practice.

The Re-Storying Framework & Strategic Action Plan

- **The Framework Document:** A comprehensive foundational guide outlining the shift from inclusion to Indigenous-centred pedagogy based in reconciliation and social justice in education. This includes the philosophical integration of the Seven Grandfather Teachings as a primary lens for curriculum.
- **Recommendations:** A recommendation for amendments to communication protocols or guidelines grounded in anti-racism and frameworks and Indigenous methodologies.

Professional Learning Journeys

- **Facilitated Learning Circles:** Instead of one-off workshops, a series of ongoing "Learning Journeys" for PSHS staff, focused on unlearning cognitive imperialism and practicing *Miingweziwin* (sharing of gifts). The re-storying will allow for a meaningful collaborative inquiry from a grassroots approach.
- **Resource Repository:** A curated digital or physical library of authentic Anishinaabe texts, oral histories (with community permission), and pedagogical tools for classroom use.

Project Outcomes (results):

To effectively uproot anti-Indigenous racism, this project moves beyond Indigenous content, instead establishing a foundational practice of re-storying that centres First Nation frameworks as the primary lens for education. We will dismantle the cognitive imperialism inherent in Western curriculum, communication, and policy. Through the leadership of an Anti-Indigenous Racism Working Group—comprised of representatives from the five First Nation communities served by [REDACTED]—this initiative will generate tangible outputs such as a comprehensive Re-storying Framework. The ultimate goal is to achieve transformative outcomes: a school climate where Anishinaabe identity is celebrated, institutional accountability is community-led, and students are empowered to achieve success through the recognition of their own inherent gifts and the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

3.PROJECT EVALUATION AND PERFORMANCE

Applicants need to demonstrate how they will measure and determine project success (example – surveys before course/workshop and surveys after course/workshop).

How will you determine and measure success?

Success is primarily defined by the strength and continuity of the partnership with the Five First Nation Communities, ensuring the Working Group functions as a foundational decision-making body rather than a temporary advisory seat.

Through qualitative "re-storying" indicators—such as sharing circles and storytelling as data—we will measure success by Anishinabek students' reported sense of cultural safety, pride, and their ability to lead through their inherent gifts and the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

Ultimately, the project will be deemed successful when educators demonstrate a definitive commitment to honour student achievement as measured by a balance of spiritual, emotional, social, physical, and academic health, signalling a true restoration of narrative sovereignty within the school. Ultimately, this program will be a shift in all people's thinking and approach to the topic of racism.

What indicators of success will you use?(e.g., key benchmarks, targets, increase in student attendance, and increase in students' grades)

To ensure the framework is both impactful and sustainable, success will be measured through a blend of holistic indicators and restorative systemic benchmarks. These indicators are in a strengths-based model that prioritizes the well-being of Anishinabek students:

1. Student Well-being & Engagement Indicators

- **Cultural Safety & Belonging:** A measurable increase in student-reported "sense of belonging" and "cultural safety" through annual qualitative surveys and sharing circles.
- Attendance patterns and credit accumulation may be monitored as secondary indicators of a more inclusive and re-storied school environment.

- **Gift Realization (Miingweziwin):** Documented student participation in leadership roles, community-based projects, and the application of the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

2. Systemic Change Indicators

- **Updated practices:** The formal integration of First Nation frameworks into the school and board administrative and communication guidelines
- **Curriculum Re-storying:** A benchmark target of ensuring that all departments have moved beyond inclusion to reconciliation and decolonization frameworks inclusive of foundational Indigenous-led inquiry or methodology.
- **Educator Growth:** Evidence of a shift in educator practice through this learning journey as collected through evaluation determined by the group.

3. Community & Relational Indicators

- **First Nation Representation and Amplification of voice:** This anti-Indigenous racism Action Circles, Community and Parent circles and student circles guide the work,
- Increased community engagement, collaborations, and consultation.

How will you collect data and monitor performance?

Moving away from extractive data practices towards stewardship and reciprocity, ensuring the Five First Nation Communities maintain ownership and oversight of their own information, we will employ:

- Storytelling as Qualitative Data: "re-storying" is a foundational pillar; stories will serve as our primary data source.
- Sharing Circles: Conducting regular sharing circles with Anishinabek students, families, and the Working Group.
- Community Narratives: We will gather feedback from the community
- Climate Surveys: Annual, anonymous school climate surveys will be customized to include specific indicators of cultural safety, experiences of microaggressions, and the visibility of Indigenous worldviews.
- Systemic Tracking: We will monitor attendance rates, credit accumulation, and graduation timelines, as well as disproportionality in disciplinary actions, to identify where systemic barriers still exist.

Monitoring Performance:

- The Anti-Indigenous Racism Working Group will oversee progress after identifying benchmarks. These will be reported at the Indigenous Education Council and [REDACTED] First Nation Education Council.

- Ethical Framework: All data collection will adhere to the principles of Indigenous research methods. This ensures that the data belongs to the communities it represents and is used exclusively for the well-being and success of Anishinabek students.

4.SHARING PROMISING PRACTICES

An objective of the Master Education Agreement is to share knowledge about promising practices. Do you intend to share promising practices developed through your project? If so, how

This project intends to engage in a model of relational reciprocity, ensuring that the promising practices developed are returned to the heart of the community.

We will share these findings and resources created, including the production of a "Re-storying Framework for Participating First Nation communities. This approach ensures systemic change and student Bimaadziwin.

5.ENGAGEMENT

Describe how communities and/or partnering organizations (other Anishinabek First Nations, School Boards, and/or affiliated third parties) will be engaged throughout the project, including sharing project outputs or outcomes.

The opportunity for engagement with the five First Nation communities and partnering organizations is grounded in the principle of relational accountability. Nothing about us, without us. The Anti-Indigenous Racism Working Group, with representatives from each community, will be co-creators of the re-storying framework, ensuring that all systemic changes and pedagogical shifts honour First Nation sovereignty. Throughout the project, school board staff and community partners will participate in shared Learning Journeys of collective unlearning and re-storying for mutual stewardship. The sharing of project outputs and outcomes will follow a Circle of Reciprocity, in alignment with Indigenous ethics of research. Findings and frameworks will be presented to community leadership for review and approval before being shared more broadly.

6. PROJECT WORKPLAN

Describe the major activities, expected outputs and timelines in the chart below, or please attach a copy of your work plan. **Your work plan should show how you expect to complete your project from start to finish.** Your description of activities should lead to the completion and success of the project in a logical and timely sequence. Be as detailed as possible (i.e, if your project includes language classes, how many language classes? If your project includes traditional teachings, how many traditional teachings?)

This aspect of the plan will be determined by the working group. Initial meetings are to take place in June/July 2026.

Activities	Outputs (products/services)	Timelines
Uprooting Racism through Policy & Guideline Change Policies and guidelines will be analyzed for omissions, inaccuracies, misrepresentations, incompleteness and consultation progress. This uprooting racism priority will employ a two-eyed seeing approach rooted in our Miigiiwewin and Miingweziwin frameworks. The following policies have been identified, and recommendations will likely be created for: Equity Policy - Creed/Accommodations UNDRIP & TRC Cultural Absences Communications and collaborations Land acknowledgment	A process for future work based on the framework Formal Recommendations for the renewal of current policies and guidelines	Draft approval by September 30, 2026 Formal recommendations to NNDSB by October
Uprooting Racism through Re-storying: Cultural Absence, Attendance and Relational Accountability. Some of the systemic issues that uphold racism through policy would have been uncovered in the first task. Using those policy changes, the uprooting, seeding, and nurturing of social justice in education continues. A Relational Response Guide will be created to address the urgency of Indigenous racism as it intersects with cultural absence, attendance, and relational accountability. The guide will reflect policy change, address the issue of the colonial school-year calendar, and invite educators and administrators into the re-storying framework.	Relational Response Guide Development of next steps (professional development?)	Drafting begins in September 2026 Final Evergreen document for implementation for February 2027. Meet in September to develop a working plan
Uprooting Racism through the Seven Grandfathers' Teachings (Elementary School Focus) The Seven Grandfather Teachings (<i>Niizhwaaswi Mishomis Kinoomaagewinawaan</i>) serve as a powerful, holistic approach to anti-Indigenous racism in education by shifting the work of equity from passive compliance to an active, relational	Resources for Elementary Schools in Uprooting Racism through the Seven Grandfathers' Teachings (Elementary)	Drafting begins in September 2026 Final Evergreen document for implementation for February 2027.

practice of decolonization. Past work in the Grandfathers' First Program will guide this work.		Meet in September to develop a working plan
The Anti-Indigenous Racism Working Group, Representatives from each community will be co-creators of the re-storying framework, ensuring that all systemic changes and pedagogical shifts.	anti-Indigenous racism, Working Group membership and terms of reference, and workplan Reflection, assessments, evaluations, and recommendations moving forward.	First Meetings in Spring 2026 Formal meetings to begin in fall 2027.

Appendix B

Miigiwewin & *Miingweziwin*

Indigenous Education Guideline Development

Uprooting anti-Indigenous racism through Capacity Building

DRAFT - August 2026

1. Understanding the Why

Indigenous Peoples are the original stewards of this land, maintaining an unbroken, historical connection to societies that predated colonial settlement. As sovereign, self-determining Nations, they possess inherent, non-transferable rights, distinct legal frameworks, and governing institutions defined by their own communities on their traditional territories.

The story told in educational institutions has been written through a single lens, on a pre-printed page, bound by colonial traditions. This is the book. As “Equity” became a priority in Ontario Education, the approach was simply Indigenous Inclusion. We looked at the existing book—a narrative constructed entirely within Eurocentric frameworks—and realized key voices were missing. So, we added First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people into the background. We included them as characters in our chapters, but we left the plot, the language, and the underlying rules untouched. The story still belonged to the original author, and Indigenous presence was merely inserted into a system that was never built for them.

Recognizing the limits of this approach, we began moving toward Reconciliation Indigenization. First Nations were invited to sit at some writing desk beside those in educational systems. Together, they began rewriting chapters, ensuring that Indigenous truths, historical realities, and lived experiences were authentically honoured. Engaging in respectful dialogue reshaped the plot. However, even in reconciliation, the story was being written in the language and in the same traditional Westernized library, governed by the same institutional policies and guidelines that held the final say.

To uproot anti-Indigenous racism, we need to step into Decolonial Indigenization. Decolonization is the understanding that Indigenous Nations must be the primary authors,

editors, and publishers of their own stories. It demands that we dismantle the belief that colonial systems hold sole authority over what constitutes valid knowledge, research, and success.

This is why school boards must revisit and resize or create education policies, guidelines, and data governance. This is not a bureaucratic exercise, but a foundational act of changing the story. Policies were the author and are the architecture of the institution of education. Policies and guidelines dictate who holds the pen, who owns the data, and whose worldview defines reality. When we realign our policies and guidelines with Indigenous frameworks. The question is no longer *"Why are Indigenous students failing the system?"* and begins asking, *"How is our system failing Indigenous students?"*

We change our story by changing our policies because true equity cannot exist in a system where one group writes the narrative for another. By shifting structural power back to Indigenous communities, we move from passive inclusion to sovereign self-determination—ensuring our educational system is no longer a place of assimilation, but a site of true justice, healing, and respect.

How does creating an Indigenous education policy foster the uprooting of anti-Indigenous racism in Ontario school systems (a starting point):

- ◇ Creates system accountability and understanding of board commitments, obligations, and expectations
- ◇ First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, and ways of knowing are embedded and supported throughout all areas of curriculum.
- ◇ Recognizes Ways of Knowing, land-based learning, oral storytelling, and community knowledge as valid and essential
- ◇ Requires collaboration, co-creation and equal decision-making between First Nations and School/School boards
- ◇ Enhances meaningful communication and partnerships
- ◇ Increases responsibility to authentic data, data analysis, and data sharing
- ◇ Requires ongoing PD for educators and administrators
- ◇ Invests in relationships, reciprocity and respect
- ◇ Challenges current systems, making way for change.
- ◇ Moves from “inclusion” models towards reconciliation and social justice in education
- ◇ Honours Education Agreements

"

Decolonial indigenization envisions the wholesale overhaul of the academy to fundamentally reorient knowledge production based on balancing power relations

between Indigenous peoples and Canadians, transforming the academy into something dynamic and new. (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 219)

By guiding educators through the progression of Inclusion, Reconciliation, Decolonization and social justice, we can grow towards authentic, meaningful and strong roots. Educators on this learning journey are asked to read the following text:

Gaudry, A., & Lorenz, D. (2018). Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: Navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 14(3), 218–227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180118785382>

Reflective Question:

Educators on this learning Journey are asked to engage in critical self-reflection. Here are some guiding questions structured to help navigate the journey toward anti-racism and supporting institutional or systemic structure with action:

1. *Am I engaging in inclusion, reconciliation or decolonization? Am I inserting diverse voices or Indigenous content as an add-on to an existing framework or am I re-centring marginalized perspectives to transform how knowledge is shared and validated?*
2. *When students face barriers or struggle academically, am I focusing on student/family deficits, or am I critically analyzing how institutional structures and policies are failing*

2. Policy & Systemic Change: Collaboration/Co-Creation

This policy draft acts as a blueprint for how Northern Ontario district school boards can actively promote, protect, and uphold Indigenous Rights while advancing Indigenous Education to meaningfully improve the daily experiences of all Indigenous Peoples within Northern Ontario school communities.

This draft is only the beginning of the framework. It must now go to meaningful collaboration and was co-created alongside:

- The Indigenous Education Advisory Circle
- Indigenous Youth Circles
- Education Service Agreement/Reciprocal educational agreement partners
- Indigenous Parents groups
- Appropriate working groups (Anti-indigenous racism, human rights, etc)
- The Indigenous Education Department and Indigenous Staff
- The Equity/Human Rights Advisory Leads

Placing Indigenous community voice at the centre supports anti-Indigenous racism efforts:

- ◇ anti-Indigenous racism has been rooted in the colonial paternalistic belief that non-Indigenous institutions know better and what is best for First Nation communities. Centring community voice directly rejects this.
- ◇ Systemic racism is an imbalance of institutional power; following community direction transfers decision-making authority back to First Nation communities towards reconciliation in education.
- ◇ First Nation students and families directly experience microaggressions, bias, discrimination, and forms of racism in school. The perspective needs to be centred for systemic understanding and change to occur.
- ◇ An internal policy without community oversight cannot properly represent any issue. When community groups co-create and monitor the policy, the school board remains directly answerable to the people it serves.
- ◇ Co-creating policy with local youth, parent groups, and regional ESA/REA partners honours the specific languages, treaties, rights, and distinct cultural realities of local Nations, rather than applying a generic approach (pan-Indianism).

All educators and administrators should have a deep understanding of community partnerships. Educators are asked to visit their board websites and discover, by family of schools, who are partners in Indigenous Education. Educators on this learning Journey are asked to read the following text:

What is the Indigenous Education Advisory Council? (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/indigenous-education-ontario>)

Reflective Question:

Educators on this learning journey are asked to engage in critical self-reflection. Here are some guiding questions structured to help navigate the journey toward anti-racism and supporting institutional or systemic structure with action:

1. When I review my board's family-of-schools map, which specific First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and treaty partners am I serving alongside? Am I familiar with the specific history, treaty obligations, and Education Service Agreements (ESAs) connected to these communities?
2. When reading about the role of the IEAC and community circles, what current school or classroom practices (e.g., streaming, disciplinary approaches, attendance policies, reporting pathways) might be causing harm or erecting barriers for First Nation students?

Commitment of Northern Ontario District School Boards

To foster genuine reconciliation, Northern Ontario district school boards are dedicated to safeguarding Inherent, Indigenous, and Human Rights. This is a commitment to tearing up, rewriting old and re-creating policy and guidelines that serve social justice in education. This work is firmly anchored in the principles of:

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action
- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
- The Ontario Human Rights Code
- Anti-Indigenous Racism Statement

Northern Ontario district school boards recognize that systemic change requires action. They are committed to aligning all board policies, daily practices, and administrative procedures to ensure the safety, dignity, and protection of Indigenous students, staff, and families. Northern Ontario School Boards are asked to formally create statements that publicly share their commitments and philosophy to the TRC, UNDRIP, OHRC, and anti-racism in relation to the Indigenous Education Policy.

How Does Implementing Commitment Support the Uprooting of anti-Indigenous racism?

- ◇ Recognizes Inherent Rights and moves to understanding and honouring sovereign rights, self-determination, and Indigenous laws.
- ◇ Linking policies to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and UNDRIP allows anti-Indigenous racism to be acted on as a legal violation rather than a policy breach.
- ◇ Committing to rewriting policies allows boards to remove system barriers.
- ◇ Making public commitments gives First Nations, parent groups, and community partners a clear standard to hold board leadership accountable.
- ◇ Ensures that upholding Indigenous rights is the responsibility of all staff and partners.

"Establishing respectful relationships also requires that we dismantle the systemic barriers that continue to exclude Indigenous perspectives, worldviews, and leadership from the halls of institutional power. Education got us into this mess, and education will get us out."

— *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*

All educators and administrators should have a deep understanding of commitments to Indigenous Education. Educators are asked to review the following statements. They are asked to choose one statement to research other boards and associated documents to create an enhanced example of a commitment statement for their own school board.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action

In direct response to TRC Calls to Action #62–65 (Education for Reconciliation), we affirm our commitment to transforming educational environments by centring Indigenous histories, cultures, languages, and contemporary perspectives. Reconciliation in education demands more than inclusion; it requires unlearning colonial paradigms and building reciprocal partnerships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

The school board recognizes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as the foundational framework for reconciliation and systemic transformation. In alignment with federal and provincial UNDRIP implementation frameworks, this Board formally commits to embedding UNDRIP principles into our system priorities, policy decisions, and daily educational practice.

The Ontario Human Rights Code

Through the Indigenous Education Policy, the Ontario Human Rights Code should be inclusive and specific to Indigenous Peoples as rights holders, rather than together with Equity Seeking groups. The *Ontario Human Rights Code* is provincial law, superseding other provincial laws, including the *Education Act*. This means that every school board is legally obligated to maintain learning and working environments free from discrimination and harassment based on protected grounds (such as race, ancestry, creed, and gender identity). The Ministry of Education enforces this through Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 (PPM 119). This directive explicitly mandates that all Ontario school boards develop, implement, and continuously update a comprehensive Equity and Inclusive Education Policy. Under Ontario's *Education Act*, school boards are legally mandated to promote student achievement and well-being, as well as ensure a safe, inclusive, and accepting school climate.

Anti-Indigenous Racism Statement

This Northern Ontario School Board affirms Indigenous Peoples are distinct from equity-deserving groups in that they are self-determining Nations with Inherent Rights, laws, and institutions. The school board is committed to building knowledge and understanding to address the ongoing impacts of colonialism that continue to impact the education of Indigenous Peoples. This includes Indigenous students' right to an education free from racism and discrimination of any kind.

Reflective Question:

Educators on this learning journey are asked to engage in critical self-reflection. Here are some guiding questions structured to help navigate the journey toward anti-racism, after educators have created a statement of commitment:

1. How will this high-level commitment statement visibly alter daily realities in your school or classroom (e.g., assessment methods, streaming practices, discipline protocols, or land-based learning opportunities)?

2. What is one concrete, measurable step you will take tomorrow in your professional practice to ensure this commitment statement actively protects and uplifts Indigenous students, staff, and families?

Land Acknowledgement: From Recitation to Action

On Anishinaabek territories, a land acknowledgement is a profound recognition of *Inherent Rights* and ongoing sovereignty. The Anishinaabek have an unbroken, sacred relationship with the land that predates colonial legal structures. Acknowledging this territory means publicly validating that their legal, social, and political jurisdictions are active, inalienable, and inextinguishable.

Land acknowledgements must be acknowledged and created at the family of schools level, honouring localized relationships. Ecosystems, treaties, and local histories change across different areas of any region. Schools must engage with the local First Nations, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, staff and students to co-create an authentic and meaningful statement. While the statements across the school board can be similar, and there may be a “board-wide” statement for websites and resources (to promote learning), generally, each family of schools would share an approach. This transforms an administrative mandate into a localized community pact.

A meaningful land acknowledgement must move from a static historical statement into a living statement of action. It must connect dynamically to the exact place and time the address is being made in the form of an action. The land acknowledgement should be delivered by whoever is hosting or leading the gathering—whether that is a principal, a teacher, a superintendent, or a student leader, OR, as determined by the community.

How Does this Support the Uprooting of anti-Indigenous racism?

For Northern Ontario school boards, this forms the pedagogical foundation for anti-racist and anti-colonial work. It explicitly tells Indigenous students that their identity and ancestral rights are the bedrock of the land the school stands on.

- ◇ Honours Truth with Active Reciprocity: under *Miigwewin*, we cannot take from a relationship without giving back. Moving the land acknowledgement into a statement of action ensures we are actively giving back through immediate, real-time commitments.
- ◇ Enhances relationships through authentic engagement in a genuine, localized circle of sharing, learning directly from local First Nations, Elders, and families
- ◇ Shares the responsibility of re-storying. Non-Indigenous hosts deliver the address to honour reciprocity, reconciliation and action-oriented acknowledgement; it models the commitment.
- ◇ Dismantles erasure through emphasizing the current and living sovereignty of the Anishinaabek.
- ◇ Increases reflection and accountability through reflection, action or thought. It shifts educators from passive observers to active, conscious allies.

“Once we have defined the relationships that we have to our own communities and others who share the land, an important next step is to reflect on our responsibilities to each other and to the land.”

(Going Beyond a land acknowledgement, page 17).

All educators and administrators should have a deep understanding of Land acknowledgments. Educators are asked to visit their board websites and discover, by family of schools, the land acknowledgement being used. Educators on this learning Journey are asked to read the following text:

https://www.etfovoice.ca/sites/default/files/ETFO_voice_Winter_2020_Curriculum.pdf

Reflective Question:

Educators on this learning journey are asked to engage in critical self-reflection. Here are some guiding questions structured to help navigate the journey toward anti-racism through better understanding of Land acknowledgments:

How am I dynamically connecting land acknowledgement to the specific purpose of this *exact gathering, lesson, or event*? What tangible action am I committing to take immediately following this meeting?

Does our Family of Schools' land acknowledgement acknowledge active, ongoing Anishinaabek sovereignty and legal rights? Or is it in the past tense of only a historical relationship?

Self-Identification

As educators, we know how vital it is to truly see and support our students, which is why we offer families and students who are 18 or older the opportunity to voluntarily and confidentially self-identify as First Nation, Métis, or Inuit, in line with provincial frameworks. You can reassure families that this information is kept completely private and secure; its sole purpose is to help us pinpoint and dismantle the systemic barriers our students face, ground our classrooms in anti-colonial practices, and enrich our Indigenous education programs. By working hand-in-hand with Indigenous Education Departments, Advisory Councils, and community experts, we use these insights to design, roll out, and refine responsive programming that genuinely lifts Indigenous student engagement, well-being, and academic success.

How Does this Support the Uprooting of anti-Indigenous racism?

- ◇ A secure, self-determined space for students and families to declare who they are, if they choose. All aspects will be created in alignment with the approved direction of the Indigenous Education Advisory councils and designated collaborators, affirming

Sovereignty in Identity Data Collection.

- ◇ Data acts as a reflection, allowing us to track outcomes such as graduation rates, streaming, and disproportionate suspension rates. Data would be used through Indigenous Research and Data frameworks to uncover systemic disparities and hold systems accountable.
- ◇ By using the insights gained from self-identification to collaborate directly with Indigenous Education Departments and communities, including Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Families and students. This is reciprocal, relevant, respectful, responsible and based in relationships.

All educators and administrators should hold a deep understanding of Land Acknowledgments as an intentional practice of respect and truth-telling. To support this, educators are asked to visit their board website and identify the specific Land Acknowledgment associated with their family of schools. As part of this learning journey, educators are encouraged to review Ontario's guidance on voluntary self-identification policies:

- **Resource:** [Ontario Guide to Developing Policies for Indigenous Student Self-Identification](#)

Critical self-reflection is essential to meaningful anti-racist practice. The following guiding questions are designed to help you navigate your ongoing learning journey:

1. How do my own identity, background, and lived experiences shape my teaching practices and expectations in the classroom?
2. What systemic biases or personal assumptions might I hold regarding Indigenous histories, cultures, and contemporary realities, and how am I actively working to unlearn them?
3. Beyond reciting a Land Acknowledgment, how am I actively integrating local Indigenous perspectives and honouring student self-determination in my daily practice?

Data & Data Sovereignty

Recognizing that research and data have historically been used to the detriment of Indigenous Peoples and Nations, school boards must ensure that all Indigenous-related information is collected, managed, and used with the highest ethical standards. To maintain this trust, any collected data will be used exclusively to identify and eliminate systemic barriers faced by Indigenous students and families, to inform anti-colonial practices, and to improve Indigenous

education programming. Crucially, in all matters concerning data, the Board will work in close partnership and consultation with the Indigenous Rights Education Department, the Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC), Inherent Rights Holders, and relevant Indigenous experts.

How Does this Support the Uprooting of anti-Indigenous racism?

- ◊ Directly confronts the historical misuse of data as a tool for surveillance, deficit-labelling, and control, shifting data collection into an ethical practice centred on justice and protection.
- ◊ Ensures data is used exclusively to expose and dismantle institutional barriers, discriminatory streaming, and systemic inequities, focusing on system failure
- ◊ Honours Indigenous rights to ownership, control, access, and possession over their own information
- ◊ Restricts data collection strictly to anti-colonial programming and barrier removal, preventing information from being misused.
- ◊ Mandates shared decision-making with the Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC), Inherent Rights Holders, and Indigenous experts, ensuring community partners directly govern how data is interpreted, reported, and acted upon.

All educators and administrators should have a deep understanding of Data and data sovereignty in relationship to education. Educators on this learning Journey are asked to review the following critical frameworks for researching Indigenous communities, OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) principles:

Resource: [First Nations Information Governance Centre \(FNIGC\): The First Nations Principles of OCAP®](#)

Reflective Question:

Educators on this learning journey are asked to engage in critical self-reflection. Here are some guiding questions structured to help navigate the journey toward anti-racism:

1. If I notice data, survey results, or assessment tools being used in my school to reinforce Anti-Indigenous stereotyping or discriminatory streaming, what concrete steps will I take to interrupt this practice?
2. Professional Commitment: What is one specific change I will make in how I collect, record, and handle student information this term to align my classroom or administrative practice with First Nations Data Sovereignty?

Final note:

Moving forward, it has been identified that the guideline should outline specialized positions (Indigenous graduation coaches, Support workers, instructional leads), Indigenous youth spaces, curriculum pathways and commitment to Anishinabemowin programs. Within the Indigenous Education Guidelines, but also integrated into the equity guidelines, there needs to be specific inclusion of Indigenous Days of recognition and cultural rights such as smudging and tobacco use.

In addition, uprooting anti-Indigenous racism must also be present in any Human Resources policy around prioritizing the recruiting and retention of Indigenous people, hiring Indigenous people and increasing Indigenous practices around hiring, representation, duty to consult, Indigenous identification and verification. This aspect of the work will require a larger circle that includes unions and HR specialists, as the guideline would exist in the Indigenous Education document but actually live in an updated Human Resources policy under hiring practices.

This draft represents a starting point of a living document that will change and progress with further reviews and editing at the upcoming Uprooting Indigenous Racism Circle.