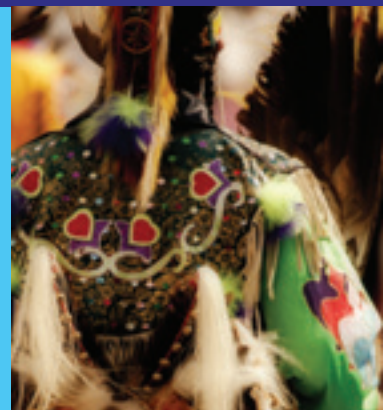


Committed to improving and supporting Aboriginal Student success



ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN HALTON

MAKING
CONNECTIONS
FOR SUCCESS



Halton District School Board



NEWS RELEASE

HALTON SCHOOL BOARDS TO HOLD COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

Parents and Community Members are Invited to Learn More about the Voluntary, Confidential Self-Identification of First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students

The Ministry of Education has identified Aboriginal education as one of its key priorities, with a focus on meeting two primary challenges by the year 2016. It is determined to improve achievement among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students; and to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the areas of literacy and numeracy, retention of students in school, graduation rates and advancement to post-secondary studies.

The joint Halton School Boards' Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee (AEAC) developed a policy on Voluntary, Confidential Self Identification of First Nation, Metis and Inuit. This policy development included community consultations. Parents and Students of all Halton Public and Halton Catholic Schools will have the opportunity to voluntarily identify their child as being of Aboriginal ancestry (First Nations, Metis, or Inuit). Self Identification will take the form of a question found on the student verification form that will be sent home in September.

"The collection of this data will increase the capacity of the school boards to respond to the learning and cultural needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students," says Sherry Saevil, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Halton Catholic and Halton District School Boards. "This data will enable the school boards to continue to promote student achievement, the development of a positive personal and cultural identity, and a sense of belonging for these students, in an effective and meaningful way."

To learn more about the process for Voluntary Confidential Self- Identification, you are invited to our Community Information Sessions. They will begin at 7:00 p.m. with light refreshments and cultural entertainment.

The Halton Catholic and Halton District School Board have launched a new project called *Making Connections for Success*. The project, which is funded by the [Ministry of Education](#), is aimed at improving learning environments and outcomes for students of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit ancestry. *Making Connections for Success* will also raise awareness about First Nation, Métis and Inuit culture, languages, history and perspectives throughout all of our schools in Halton.

We are working closely with the First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities to develop a strategy that will help students realize their full potential. This includes developing a Voluntary Confidential First Nation, Métis and Inuit Student Self-Identification policy. This policy will ensure the Board collects accurate data for students of First Nation, Métis and Inuit ancestry beginning in Kindergarten through to Grade 12. This will track student progress and help evaluate the effectiveness of new student success initiatives.

Every student in our Boards will have a copy, or access to, our [Voluntary Confidential First Nation, Métis and Inuit Student Self-Identification Brochure](#). We have developed a communications kit to provide you with more detailed information about this exciting initiative.

Making Connections for Success Communications Kit:

- [NEWS RELEASE](#)
- [WORKING TOGETHER](#)
- [OUR FIRST NATION, MÉTIS INUIT EDUCATION PROJECT](#)
- [OUR RESPONSE](#)
- [LOOKING AHEAD](#)
- [RESEARCH & IDENTIFY PROBLEM/NEED](#)
- [OUR PROGRESS AT A GLANCE](#)
- [MOVING FORWARD](#)
- [DID YOU KNOW](#)

DATE	LOCATION
May 24, 2011	E. C. Drury High School (215 Ontario Street South, Milton)
May 30, 2011	Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School (2333 Headon Forest Drive, Burlington)
May 31, 2011	Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School (2420 Sixth Line, Oakville)



WORKING TOGETHER

The Halton School Boards are committed to developing a new relationship with the Aboriginal community. By working together, we can help ensure that First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students receive the highest quality of education in our schools.

We have established a committee to advise and guide our Aboriginal Education project, called ***Making Connections for Success***. We strive to build a solid foundation and seek direction on key education issues from our Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee.

OUR ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The role of this group is to guide and advise the project from an Aboriginal perspective with a focus on culture, Aboriginal identity, local history and language.

For further information, please contact:

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In 2007, the Ministry of Education introduced the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework, which has identified three educational goals to benefit Aboriginal students;

- High level of Student Achievement
- Reduce gaps in Student Achievement
- High level of Public Confidence

Ensuring that First Nation, Métis and Inuit students receive the highest quality of education is a key goal for our Board.

Through ***Making Connections for Success*** we will work together with the Aboriginal community to promote awareness and appreciation for First Nations, Métis and Inuit history, culture, language and perspectives as well as provide support to Aboriginal students in our elementary and secondary schools.

You can find out more about the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework by visiting www.edu.gov.on.ca.



OUR FIRST NATION, MÉTIS, INUIT EDUCATION PROJECT

RECENT PAST

In 2005, a commitment was made by political and Aboriginal leaders from across Canada to take action to close the quality of life gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Improving educational achievement for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 was one of the ways identified to make meaningful change.

As a result, in 2007, the Ministry of Education launched the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework, with the goal to improve the learning environment and educational outcomes for Aboriginal Students. The Ministry of Education committed to providing funds to support school boards across the province so they can promote awareness and appreciation for First Nation, Métis and Inuit history, culture, language and perspectives of all students in Ontario schools.

OUR RESPONSE

In April 2009, the Halton Catholic and Halton District School Board began the process by hiring an Aboriginal Liaison Officer. Together, they've establish an Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee with members of our community, interested teachers, and Superintendents from each school board. All parties have a distinct role and bring unique perspectives to the table. We have already seen the benefits from working together on project.

Our First Nation, Métis and Inuit education project is called ***Making Connections for Success*** which we feel reflects the importance of working together for the benefit of present and future generations. A major focus of this project is to establish a Voluntary Confidential First Nation, Métis and Inuit Student Self-Identification Policy. The goal of this policy is to collect accurate data in order to track student progress and help us evaluate the effectiveness our new student success initiatives.

LOOKING AHEAD

We look forward to the many opportunities that this project will offer our school communities. Studies show that the most effective schools are ones that recognize Aboriginal cultures, identity, values and needs, while challenging students to acquire the skills necessary to succeed in life. As we plan for the future, we invite you to attend one of the community consultations events that we have planned, or call to arrange a group presentation or one-on-one interview. Your input is important as we work together in Making Connections for Success.

RESEARCH/IDENTIFY PROBLEM OR NEED

Historically, Canada's original people have endured great injustices, all well documented. Ontario's Ministry of Education launched a province-wide initiative to improve learning environments and outcomes for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, which they outlined in the *Ontario, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*.

Both Halton Catholic and Halton District School Boards established three goals to support the Ministry's initiative and to assist our First Nation, Métis and Inuit students reach education and career objectives: 1. Collect accurate data on enrolment, student success and graduation rates, 2. Determine program needs and 3. Identify student supports.

Establishing a Voluntary Self- Identification process was a key step. Simply put, we didn't have a mechanism in place to identify First Nation, Métis and Inuit ancestry in our schools and therefore had no way of knowing what supports and programs may be needed to improve learning outcomes.

Establishing an identification process for our schools, without consultations, would have been met with fear and mistrust. This flows from a flawed and broken historical relationship between all levels of government and Canada's First Nation, Métis and Inuit people of Canada. It is commonly known that Aboriginal students experience systematic abuse at the hands of the educational institutions throughout our country. The aftermath still impacts First Nation, Métis and Inuit students and communities. Developing a communication strategy that was sensitive to this context was critical.

For a productive and successful self-identification process, communication and consultations goals were established:

- To develop user-friendly and culturally sensitive communications materials to raise awareness about our the Board's project called Making Connections for Success and to create an understanding about the province wide initiative
- To gather input on First Nation, Métis and Inuit student challenges and seek direction on ways to support student success

- To obtain feedback and direction in regards to the implementation of the Voluntary Self Identification Policy
- To ensure staff members in both boards are educated about Making Connections for Success project
- To ensure that students and families are provided a sense of safety to self identify

PLANNING/ANALYSIS

Target Audiences - First Nation, Métis and Inuit student and their families, Aboriginal groups and community stakeholders, elders, leaders in the Aboriginal community, all of our school community, staff, media and general public.

Involvement of others – Community consultation is vital. For the first time in our Board's history, we had an opportunity to consult with our First Nation, Métis and Inuit community to increase our cultural understandings and better support student success. Involving others was critically important, to maintain cultural sensitivity and ensure that we are truly meeting the needs of community, while building new relationships. As a starting point, we sought community input on the development of our project theme (Making Connections for Success), our logo (which incorporates cultural icons from our First Nation Métis Inuit communities). The logo and theme will become a recognizable brand for the entire initiative.

The formation of the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee has been key as we develop communications material (from information packages, brochures, and website information to the **Voluntary Self-Identification Policy**). All material was provided to these groups for feedback in advance. Consultation groups included: Chiefs of Ontario, Métis Nation of Ontario, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, Hamilton Native Friendship Centre, Native Women's Association, and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami just to name a few.

OUR PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

Here's a snapshot of what we've accomplished since the inception of our Education Project.

- An Aboriginal Liaison Officer was hired to work with Superintendents of Education from both Boards to implement our First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Project
- Established an Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee (AEAC) to guide and advise the project from an Aboriginal perspective with a focus on culture, Aboriginal Identity, local history and language. The AEAC membership represents various stakeholders who also provide updates and seek their input on our process. We continue to meet monthly
- Visited other school boards in Ontario currently implementing this Ministry initiative to gather best practises for developing our Voluntary Confidential Aboriginal Self Identification Policy
- Native Studies credit courses are offered at Christ the King, Notre Dame, Corpus Christi, and Assumption, Bishop Reding, Acton High School, White Oaks Secondary School, MM Robinson Burlington Central High School, Abby Park High School, Aldershot E. C. Drury High School. Starting September 2011, Milton District High School will also offer Native Studies.
- To continue to develop a wide range of communications material to help promote Making Connections for Success within our respective Boards, the community and various stakeholders
- Continue to offer community consultation activities, including displays, presentations, interviews with community members, and stakeholders as we build our community network.
- Yearly proposals submitted to the Ministry of Education will enable us to purchase resources, to hire additional staff and implement student success strategies.



MOVING FORWARD

September 2009: First Nations, Métis and Inuit students face a number of cultural differences and challenges that make it difficult for many to be successful in school. Both Halton School Boards recognize that in order to further the educational attainment of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, schools must take a leadership role to develop positive, supportive relationships.

Both Halton Catholic and Halton District School Boards are launching a new project called "Making Connections for Success". The aim is to improve learning environments and outcomes for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students. It will also raise awareness about Aboriginal culture, language, history and perspectives in both the Catholic and Public schools throughout Halton.

"First Nation, Inuit and Métis have long advocated learning that affirms their own ways of knowing, cultural traditions and values. However, Aboriginal Peoples also desire Western education that can equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in Canadian society. First Nations, Inuit and Métis recognize that "two ways of knowing" will foster the necessary conditions for nurturing healthy, sustainable communities" (Canadian Centre for Learning www.ccl-cca.ca).

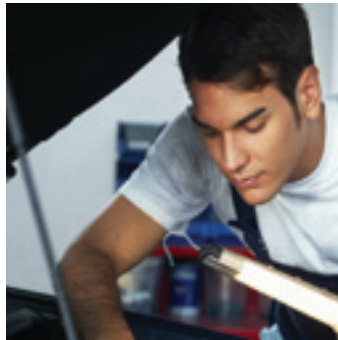
With the establishment of "Making Connections for Success" it is our commitment to embrace diversity, acceptance and respect that will increase and strengthen the knowledge and understanding among all Ontarians of First Nations, Métis and Inuit governance, history, treaty and Aboriginal rights, lands, cultures and language.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many people are not aware that there are ten native studies and seven native language high school courses developed by the Ministry of Education. The ten native studies courses listed below were revised in 2001 to help promote Aboriginal history, culture, language and perspectives. The courses are available in print and on the Ministry of Education website at

www.edu.gov.on.ca.

GRADE	COURSE NAME	PERQUISITE
Grade 9	Expressing Aboriginal Cultures	n/a
Grade 10	Aboriginal Peoples in Canada	n/a
Grade 11	English: Contemporary Voices	Grade 10 English (Academic or Applied)
	English: Contemporary Voices	Grade 10 English (Academic)
	Aboriginal Beliefs, Values and Aspirations in Contemporary Society	Grade 10 Aboriginal Peoples in Canada (open) or Grade 10 Canadian History in the 20 th Century (Academic or Applied)
Grade 12	Current Aboriginal Issues in Canada	
	Aboriginal Governance: Emerging Directions Issues of Indigenous Peoples in a Global Context	Any grade 11 university, university/college or college preparation course in Native Studies



The Ministry of Education has identified Aboriginal education as one of its key priorities, with a focus on meeting two primary challenges by the year 2016 - to improve achievement among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students; and to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the areas of literacy and numeracy, retention of students in school, graduation rates, and advancement to postsecondary studies.

For more information, please contact:

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