

HWDSB

Indigenous
Education

Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP) 2021-2025



As we process and honour this heartache collectively, I am working to return to my values and grounding myself in the teachings I carry:

It can't all be about loss.

I can't dedicate my life to grief.

I refuse to let the anger win.

I refuse.

Instead, I'll hug my children. I'll make sure their bellies are full and that they have smiles on their faces. That they know they are loved. That they are proud of their culture.

Their happiness is my resistance and resilience.

-Naomi Johnson, Executive Director
imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival
May 31, 2021

Reframing Language

This action plan incorporates the “language of empowerment, resilience, and strength” found in [Restorative Journey: Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) to support education, commemoration, healing/wellness.

Some terms used in this resource include:

Devillagized: being removed from the village model of life and its related systems of interdependence and cooperative living.

Colonized: the deliberate and active processes of superimposing foreign control and possession over Indigenous lands and peoples.

Decolonize: the act of Indigenous People repatriating things that were unjustly claimed by colonizers. For treaty partners, decolonizing can mean a revisit to the history as they were taught.

Revillagize: displace ‘decolonize’ and help the people return to the village model of life and related systems of interdependence and cooperative living.

Indigenous Educational Wellness: We untangle education from trauma and understand that education can now be part of total wellness and that Indigenous Knowledges will be celebrated.

Palisade Model: The ancient villages were protected by a palisade. We can each represent a pillar in the palisade, protecting the learners’ best interests as we move forward.

Restorative Indigenous Education: In 2014, the mention of residential school was removed from the Indian Act. We participate in the restorative journey toward inherent educational wellness through the re-emergence of Indigenous Knowledge by actively seeking and celebrating accurate and authentic Indigenous Knowledges, pedagogies and ways of knowing, being and doing.

Intergenerational Healing & Intergenerational Survival: We celebrate our survival and cumulative educational wellness.

Vision:

We will protect our learners and educators, by using peace, friendship, respect and love as pillars of our palisade.

Purpose:

Honouring Our Ancestors: We will revillagize, reclaim, renew, restore and celebrate Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, to foster intergenerational healing and wellness.

Intent:

The Approaching Faces/Tehatikonhsatóntyé (Haudensosaunne)

Seven Generations Forward/ niizhwaaswi-e-zhi-aangobijigeng (Anishinaabe)

We do this to benefit future generations, healing from cultural genocide that displaced many from ancestral homelands and deprived them of traditional language and knowledge systems.



Overview

In 2018, the Indigenous Education Circle (IEC) began this plan by reviewing Indigenous Education priorities at Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) and the provincial Ministry of Education.

We worked with the local Indigenous community to maintain the integrity of Indigenous languages, knowledge systems, worldviews, and ways of knowing, being and doing.

Indigenous Education needs to be accurate, authentic and accountable to the local urban Indigenous community, Three Fires Confederacy and Haudenosaunee Confederacy nations, and to all representative communities and individuals.

The plan's five pillars – Revitalize, Reclaim, Renew, Restore and Celebrate – create the opportunity to have the collective voices raised to honour education, commemoration, healing/wellness.

We envision this work as a move toward restorative Indigenous educational wellness and success for students, families, communities, and nations, guided by the approaching faces.

Throughout this journey, we appreciate the voice and contributions of the local urban Indigenous community, as well as knowledges and/or language protectors from Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit.

As Indigenous People, we move this plan forward, inviting treaty partners with the same baseline of peace, friendship and respect and in the same spirit of the treaty agreements, “as long as the grass grows, river flows, and the sun shall rise.”

“This is the thing that amazes me constantly, when you look at layers of trauma and the damage done by Canada, that Indigenous Peoples continue to reach out with open hands and open hearts and say let’s build a better country and a better future together.”

- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. National Indigenous Peoples Day, June 21, 2022.

Revillagize

Returning to the mindset of our Ancestors when they lived in ancient villages based on systems of reciprocity.

ACTIONS:

- Maintain safe educational spaces for Indigenous learners.
- Recruit and retain Indigenous staff.
- Provide Indigenous language classes.
- Reclaim Indigenous languages.
- Enhance partnerships with Indigenous stakeholders.
- Develop and maintain respectful relationships with Indigenous partners.
- Value local Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.
- Provide Indigenous classes in history, literature, arts, environmental stewardship and governance models.
- Prioritize Indigenous Education across the system. Clarify roles of Indigenous Education staff to the broader HWDSB community.
- Honour the importance of space for restorative Indigenous Education.
- Build staff and community capacity with professional learning.



Two Row Wampum Belt, painting by Six Nations artist Elizabeth Doxtater



Like Smoke that Rises, painting by Six Nations artist Elizabeth Doxtater

Reclaim

We displace intergenerational shame, fear and trauma with our inherent intergenerational wellness as we reclaim our knowledges, pedagogies, culture(s), language(s), and laws.

ACTIONS:

- Help all HWDSB staff and students learn about accurate and authentic approaches to Indigenous Education that are accountable to Indigenous communities.
- Develop, implement, maintain and evaluate cultural programs for Indigenous learners.
- Support Strengthening Hamilton's Aboriginal Education (SHAE) program in partnership with Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC).
- Support Native Youth Advancement With Education Hamilton (NYA:WEH) programs in partnership with Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg.
- Create respectful dialogue to decolonize Board policies and practices.
- Allow Indigenous student voice to improve educational policies and practices through Cultivating Community: Reclaiming Our Spaces in Education (CC:ROSE).
- Ensure and increase cultural sensitivity through shared structures in education.



Grandmother Moon in the Seventh Hour in the Western Sky, painting by Six Nations artist Elizabeth Doxtater



Renew

Renew respectful relationships with treaty partners, reaffirming that our shared roles and responsibilities continue.

ACTIONS:

- In adherence to local Indigenous nation protocols (i.e., family/clan/nation), allow for grant days to attend and participate in ceremony.
- Honour traditional Indigenous bereavement.
- Build understanding of the role, purpose and intent of Shakowennakará:tats.
- Enhance the practices of conflict resolution, safe schools and restorative justice.
- Scan cross-curricular content to incorporate a balancing Indigenous perspective.
- Develop an Indigenous Educational Toolkit to build student and staff capacity.
- Include Indigenous structures in development of the Board Annual Plan.
- Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous community organizations.
- Renew and revisit the Learning Nest program.
- Maintain respectful dialogue of social patterns regarding Indigenous identity (i.e., status Indian, non-status, Metis, Inuit, persons of native/Indigenous descent, self-identifying as Indigenous).
- Review and renew the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Policy with Indigenous structures and teams.



Restore

Restore our original instructions to provide guidance and support to every learner to protect Mother Earth and to help the people.

ACTIONS:

- Restore cultural humility by affirming Indigenous sovereignty and the Two Row governance model.
- Provide Indigenous leadership, mentorship and orientation.
- Practice a Two Row parallel approach in all governance reviews.
- Provide a system of ethical engagement when it involves Indigenous Peoples with prior consultation and approval of home community/band.
- Develop, implement, maintain and evaluate Indigenous Education pilot projects (i.e., NBE3U, FNMI Studies, etc.).
- Co-develop a communications strategy to explain Indigenous Education.
- Restore peace, friendship and respect through including Indigenous Knowledges in HWDSB senior leadership and Trustees.
- Co-create a policy to hire, retain and promote Indigenous staff at all levels.
- Build capacity on Indigenous Cultural Safety and Indigenous Human Rights.
- Ensure HWDSB strategic priorities and directions reflect recommendations from the 94 Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) Final Report on Indigenous Peoples and Education and are responsive to Restorative Journey: Indigenous Educational Wellness (2021), Ontario College of Teachers



The Ethical Standard of Trust, painting by Six Nations artist Elizabeth Doxtater



The Ethical Standard of Integrity, painting by Six Nations artist Elizabeth Doxtater

Celebrate

Celebrate accuracy, authenticity, and accountability to local/host Indigenous communities, by advancing Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness, while reconciling our roles as Indigenous Peoples and treaty partners.

ACTIONS:

- Refresh HWDSB's reconciliation policies (i.e., Land Acknowledgements).
- Include Indigenous protocols when appropriate in consultation with the Indigenous Cultural Safety Team.
- Celebrate student achievements that foster intergenerational healing and wellness (i.e., year-end celebrations).
- Provide land-based learning, ceremonies and cultural programs, as per current and updated policies (i.e., Smudging).
- Celebrate the agreements in the Two Row that were based on eternal peace, friendship and respect.



Learn more:

Find the full version of this plan, a one-page summary and more at:

www.hwdsb.on.ca/indigenous-action-plan/

To contact the Indigenous Education Department at HWDSB, please email:

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