

AGENDA: 6:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
2. HWDSB Land Acknowledgement
3. Approval of the Agenda
4. Review of the Committee Workplan

Policy Reviews:

5. Indigenous Education
6. Educational Excursions
7. Staff Engagement

8. Adjournment

Subject: Indigenous Education Policy

Executive Council Member Responsible: Jolene John
Indigenous Education Lead



BACKGROUND

The Indigenous Education Policy, approved by the Board in May 2024, was scheduled for review after its first year to incorporate refinements. Following this review, staff have made targeted updates to strengthen the reconciliation focus within the Guiding Principles, emphasize relationships with learners, families, kinship networks, and Treaty Partners, and align the policy framework with the Two Row Relational Accountability Framework and Ethical Space of Engagement.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Indigenous Education Policy be recommended for approval.

	POLICY NO: 6.6
Adopted	XXXX
Projected Review Date	XXXX
Revisions	XXXX

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION POLICY 2026

ABSTRACT

“We come from truth holders and truth tellers. We carry history. We come from the ancients, from the villages of our Ancestors. We represent the new village. As we walk forward to a brighter future knowing our collective potential, we know that we can do anything. We will find the protection of Peace at the base of that white pine tree. Our homes will be strengthened and protected. Our minds will be straight, like smoke that rises. We are still here. We will always be here.”

- E. Doxtater (2023) to CC:ROSE Learners

Preface

We humbly invite the HWDSB community to engage as co-learners, Treaty Partners and community members with the Indigenous Education Policy. As you read, learn and action the policy in your classrooms and communities, we ask you to remember and center the following:

- The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to cultivate and nurture meaningful relationships between Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB), the Board of Trustees, and the [Indigenous Education Circle \(IEC\)](#) to action the shared goal of [Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) in a restorative education system. The policy is also a foundational tool, meant to be a living resource for your own learning and actions.
- This policy was co-developed in consultation with the Indigenous Education Circle and first-language speaker, Nokomis Martina Osawamick. The IEC is a Ministry of Education-mandated, community-guided governing body that works in parallel to and in syncretism with HWDSB's Board of Trustees. It is a living document that will continue to be shaped as we uncover and reclaim our knowledges, pedagogies, cultures, languages and laws, and continue to center our commitments to accuracy, authenticity, appropriateness and accountability.
- The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2022-2032 as the decade of Indigenous Languages. This proclamation acknowledges the vital and urgent need to revitalize and promote Indigenous languages around the world. As part of our commitment to Indigenous language reclamation and restoration, we have included Indigenous translations, interpretations and phrases throughout the policy. They are not literal translations. Instead, these translations aim to provide the essence of the meaning of the teaching or concept as we understand it currently. The Indigenous Education Department will continue to refine our understandings and deepen our learnings in consultation with local Host Nations.
- As the Indigenous Education Department continues to learn with and alongside the IEC, Elders, Knowledge Holders and Language Speakers, we acknowledge that some of what we learn is Sacred Ancestral Knowledge meant to be protected and upheld by and for Indigenous Peoples only. Throughout this policy, we offer some teachings that are meant for raising awareness about the principles that guide our work and practice. We share these principles for your awareness in the spirit of friendship. They are not intended to be adopted, appropriated or co-opted into teaching and learning spaces without responsible considerations, ethical engagement and consultation with the Indigenous Education Department.

Our relationships are grounded in our shared [treaty](#) agreement responsibilities.

By virtue of nation-to-nation and [Indigenous](#)-Crown relationships, symbolized in wampum, every [Treaty Partner](#) has a moral, ethical, and fiduciary responsibility to maintain the spirit and intent of these original agreements.



We recognize our location within the **Gdoonaagidnaa, Sewatokwà:tshera, One Dish wampum [treaty](#)** territory. Informed by the understandings of local Indigenous Knowledge Guardian (Six Nations Polytechnic), Tehahenteh, this [treaty](#) recognizes the responsibility of everyone to harvest only what is needed and to share what is harvested. The agreement conveys that the Earth provides for everyone, so no one should go hungry. It also includes the understanding that anyone who benefits from what the Earth provides has a responsibility to care for and protect “all of the entities on her body” (Doxtater, 2021).

The local [Indigenous Host Nations](#) are the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Six Nations of the Grand River. We acknowledge the Anishinaabe Three Fires Confederacy¹ and the guiding [Seven Sacred Teachings](#) of bravery, honesty, humility, love, respect, truth, and wisdom. We also acknowledge the Haudenosaunee Confederacy² and the three guiding principles of [The Great Law](#) of a good mind, peace and power.

Tékeni Niyothatátye Kahswéntha (The Two Row Wampum)



The [treaty](#) agreement represents “the two vessels, they in their ship, and we in our canoe travelling down the river of life. The two purple stripes represent our respective ways of being. Each having our own governance ways, cultures, language, and beliefs. The three white stripes would represent peace,

¹ Three Fires Confederacy includes: Ojibway- Faith Keepers, Odawa- Trade Keepers, and Pottawatomi- Fire Keepers.

² The Haudenosaunee Confederacy consists of: Mohawk - People of the Flint; Oneida – People of the Standing Stone; Onondaga- People of the Great Mountain; Cayuga- People of the Pipe; Seneca - People of the Rolling Hills; and; Tuscarora- People of the Shirt.

friendship and equality... We would respect each other and not interfere with each others' ways or try to steer the others vessel. This living document would last forever; "as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow. We would be 'brothers' as equals" (Tehahenteh, Knowledge Guardian).

Silver Covenant Chain³



Another agreement symbolizing friendship and [relational accountability](#) was also introduced and it is called **Teyontatenentshónteron (We are connected by our arms)**. Rope would not be used as it would break. Iron would not be used as it would rust, and so silver would be used because when it would tarnish, the two brothers would get together to polish the chain and renew their covenant. It is said when there would be an issue that would arise, one would tug on the chain and request a meeting where they would resolve the issue that came before them.

This became our relationship and our covenant to each other, not just with the Dutch, but all settlers (Tehahenteh, Knowledge Guardian).

A message from the Indigenous Education Lead

Wa'tkwanonhwerá:ton, Welcome students, families, educators, staff, and [Treaty Partners](#),

The Indigenous Education Kahwà:tsire, Zaagi'idiwin, Family opens this policy in deep gratitude and respect. As [Treaty Partners](#), we share an ongoing collective responsibility to honor and uphold our agreements through meaningful action - ensuring daily care, accountability, and relationship-building in all we do. You are not just guests in this process; you are vital participants in safeguarding the well-being and future of [Indigenous](#) and non-Indigenous learners and families across our communities.

The HWDSB Indigenous Education Policy arrives at a transformative time in our shared history. We celebrate our Grade 6 students and look forward to 2031, when the first cohort who has *never lived under the threat of Residential Schools* will graduate. This milestone comes ten years after the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#) (2015) and marks measurable progress toward justice, healing, and equity in education. We are grateful for the Board of Trustees' and staff's ongoing commitment to [reconciliation](#) shown through [ethical engagement](#) and consultation with [Indigenous](#) communities via the [Indigenous Education Circle](#) (IEC) and Indigenous Education Department. Your

³ The second part of the Two Row Wampum agreement is the Silver Covenant Chain, also widely referred to as the Friendship Belt and both terms are used interchangeably binding newcomers to a promise to protect education, welfare of the people, and ongoing trade, in exchange for living in our homelands.

ongoing partnership is essential evidence of intentional steps toward relationships rooted in Kirkness and Barnhardt's [4 'R's: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility](#) (1991).

The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UN Declaration, 2007) maintains the conditions for [ethical engagement](#) and consultation with [Indigenous](#) Peoples and affirms inherent rights to [self-determination](#) and [free, prior, and informed consent](#). We urge the Board of Trustees to embody these principles daily by engaging meaningfully with [Indigenous](#) communities, respecting [Indigenous](#) leadership, and working together - in [syncretism](#) - as parallel partners with accountability and transparency.

The Ontario College of Teacher's [Ethical Standards](#) (2025) and [Standards of Practice](#) (2025) guide every educator in this system to act with respect, care, trust, integrity, and a commitment to lifelong learning rooted in relationship, reflection, and responsibility.

The Board of Trustee's continued collaboration with the Indigenous Education Department and [Indigenous Education Circle](#) is evidence of its intentional journey toward respectful, ethical, and transformative education. Let this policy serve as a living document, one that calls us not only to [reconciliation](#) but to [revillagize](#), [reclaim](#), [renew](#), [restore](#) and [celebrate](#) a restorative education system.

We are all [Pillars of the Palisade](#), responsible for the care and protection of every student. Together, we will create strength through unity and establish the structural integrity necessary to sustain nurturing and nourishing learning environments. These environments will cultivate intergenerational healing and wellness, [wholism](#), belonging, and thriving success. By upholding [compassion](#), [dignity](#), [trust](#), and [joy](#), we ensure every student is recognized, valued, seen and supported to reach their full potential.

PURPOSE:

Education systems have been built upon [dominant Eurocentric ideologies](#) which have reinforced the intentional erasure of Indigenous Knowledges, languages, cultures, governance systems and beliefs. The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to cultivate and nurture meaningful relationships between Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB), the Board of Trustees, and the [Indigenous Education Circle \(IEC\)](#), an Ontario Ministry of Education standard, to action the shared goal of [Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) in a restorative education system.

As we untangle the legacies of [colonial](#) schooling systems as systems that were implemented under the guise of education (Doxtater, 2021, p. 40), and by understanding how the deprivation of Indigenous Knowledges resulted in a spectrum of contemporary consequences, we approach this work in peace, friendship, and with mutual respect. The Two Row Relationship Framework⁴ is rooted in [relational accountability](#). We walk forward together, recognizing our common learning journey: *Every Child Matters*.

⁴ The Two Row Wampum treaty belt is the original relationship framework between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans, with emphasis on mutual respect and non-interference.

The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)⁵ (currently called the UN Declaration formerly called UNDRIP, 2007) maintains the conditions for [ethical engagement](#) and consultation with [Indigenous](#) Peoples and communities (i.e., the [IEC](#)) and respects inherent rights to [self-determination](#) and [free, prior, and informed consent](#) as a standard for excellence in service delivery. Thus, the Board of Trustee’s meaningful engagement and ethical consultation with the [Indigenous](#) communities through the [IEC](#) and Indigenous Education Department is appreciated, and is evidence of intentional steps towards respectful, reciprocal, and reconciling relations.

Host Nations

HWDSB is located *between two important rivers*: the Credit River is fed by Lake Ontario at the location now known as the City of Mississauga, which was the original village site of the Mississaugas of the Credit. The Grand River, for the Six Nations community, is the marker for the Haldimand Deed of 1784⁶, which promises to protect six miles deep on each side of the Grand River from the ‘mouth to the source’, and goes on to say, ‘which them and their posterity are to enjoy forever’.

“Between two rivers” translates as:

- *Edooying mijoonoon niizh ziibiin*⁷. Ojibwe
- *Tsi nya'tekyátere ne tekahyónhake*⁸. Mohawk

HWDSB continues to foster an honest understanding of [Indigenous Host Nations’](#) cultures, which includes the traditional role as the original “stewards of these lands”. In friendship with Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN), Six Nations of the Grand River (SNGR), and the [IEC](#), HWDSB will continue to nurture and strengthen this alliance, recognizing everyone has a responsibility as committed [Treaty Partners](#).

HWDSB understands and upholds our shared [Treaty Partner](#) responsibilities to the [Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan’s \(IECSAP\)](#) purpose and vision:

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

At HWDSB, each Pillar is strengthened through the collective unity of the [Palisade](#). Together, we make a meaningful commitment to [Reinforcing Indigenous Educational Wellness & Reconciliation](#):

We will honour our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation by nurturing respectful and reciprocal relationships among Indigenous Peoples and Treaty Partners, and by cultivating intergenerational

⁵ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples’ Timeline: 2007 Canada voted against the adoption; 2016 Canada fully endorsed and committed to its implementation; and; 2021 it received Royal Assent and came into force in June 21, making UNDRIP law in Canada.

⁶ [Haldimand Deed](#)

⁷ We credit and extend gratitude to Nokomis Martina Osawamick, Ojibwe/Odawa from Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, amik/beaver clan, for this Anishinaabemowin language translation.

⁸ We credit and extend gratitude to Tehahenteh, Mohawk, turtle clan from Six Nations of the Grand River for this Kanyen’kéha translation.

healing and wellness in a restorative education system ([Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#)).

In a restorative education system, we make meaningful space for our shared, but distinct [Indigenous](#) and [Treaty Partner](#) (Western, Eurocentric) perspectives and approaches to commemoration, education, and healing and wellness⁹. We do this to benefit current students, families, the whole [HWDSB Community](#), and the ‘approaching faces’, also known as the future generations. We carry these truths forward.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

HWDSB approaches the Indigenous Education Policy in friendship with [Indigenous](#) Peoples. Together we make intentional space to first honour, recognize, and affirm the guiding philosophical principles of the host nations and the [Indigenous Education Circle](#) (IEC), who, co-determine Indigenous Education Standards at HWDSB, [for-Indigenous-by-Indigenous](#). We acknowledge the enduring legacy of systemic, institutionalized racism and the broader impacts of [colonialism](#), including gender-based violence, [racism](#), [cultural genocide](#), and forced [assimilation](#). These have been perpetuated through legislation, policies, and practices that have deeply [oppressed Indigenous](#) Peoples. We then take our place alongside the [IEC](#) to outline the philosophical principles, based on on-going community consultation that informs our work in-relationship.

Host Nations’ Natural Laws & Guiding Principles

A shared commonality across many [Indigenous Worldviews](#) is our path to connectedness and interconnectedness, interdependency, and inter-relationality. HWDSB understands the importance of recognizing [Host Nations](#): Mississaugas of the Credit and Six Nations of the Grand River. We honour their distinct and inherent laws, rich cultures, languages, philosophies, traditional governance models, and ways of knowing, being, and doing. This is sacred knowledge for Indigenous Peoples only, and is not intended to be adopted or co-opted into teaching and learning spaces without responsible considerations, ethical engagement and consultation with the Indigenous Education Department.

- The Anishinaabe, Three Fires Confederacy and the [Seven Sacred Teachings](#):
 - *Zoongide’ewin* – Bravery
 - *Gwayakwaadiziwin* – Honesty
 - *Dabasendiziwin* – Humility
 - *Zaagi’idiwin* – Love
 - *Manaaji’idiwin* – Respect
 - *Debwewin* – Truth
 - *Nibwaakaawin* – Wisdom
- Haudenosaunee [Great \(Natural\) Law](#):
 - *Ka’nikonhrí:yo* – The Good Mind
 - *Skén:nen* – Peace (healthy mind, healthy body)

⁹ Commemoration, Education, Healing, and Wellness are main components of the Federal Indian Day School Class Action Lawsuit.

- *Ka'satsténhsera* – Strength through Unity

Broader Contextual Policies, Principles, Legislation & Legislative Abuses

In friendship, we offer the following policies, principles, legislation, and legislative abuses to contextualize the historical and ongoing relationship between [Indigenous](#) Peoples and Canada (on behalf of the Crown), and emphasize the call for our individual and collective efforts towards advancing *truth* in [reconciliation](#) in education.

Global

- 1959 [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- 2007 We are guided by the international [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(the UN Declaration\)](#), as presented to UN members and voted against by Canada, along with Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.
- 2010 We acknowledge Canada's endorsement of the UN Declaration as an aspirational document by reversing its vote; however, it was non-legally binding and did not change Canadian law
- 2016 We acknowledge Canada's official removal of objector status to the UN Declaration
- 2019 We recognize the United Nations [International Year of Indigenous Languages](#)
- 2022-2032 We recognize [United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization](#) (UNESCO) decade of Indigenous Languages

[Kaná:ta](#) - Canada

- 1794 Jay Treaty
- 1814 Treaty of Ghent
- 1857 [Gradual Civilization Act](#)
- 1869 [Gradual Enfranchisement Act](#)
- 1876 [Indian Act](#) the oldest, racist, and gender-based legislation in Canada that remains active
- 1879 Davin Report, also known as the [Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds](#)
- 1907 Report on [The Indian Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories](#) by Dr. Peter H. Bryce
- 1917 [Canadian Women in Ontario are given the right to vote](#)
- 1922 The Story of a National Crime also known as [The Bryce Report](#), was published
- 1950s Prior, it was illegal for [Indians](#) to own land off reserve, including [War Veterans](#) who volunteered to serve
- 1960 [Indians](#) were given the [right to vote](#) without conditions
- 1967 We recognize [A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies – Part 2 \(The Hawthorn Report\)](#)
- 1972 We are guided by the legacy of Indigenous advocacy of [self-determination](#) in Indigenous Education, such as the [Indian Control of Indian Education Policy Paper](#)
- 1996 Federal government placed a 2% cap on Indigenous elementary and secondary education, which led to longstanding gross disparities between federal and provincial funding models
- 1998 [Address by the Honourable Jane Stewart Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on the occasion of the unveiling of Gathering Strength - Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan](#)

- 2006 Indian Residential School Class Action Lawsuit Announcement
- 2007 We are guided by the spirit and intent of Orange Shirt Day, September 30th
- 2014 We are encouraged that Indian Residential School was removed from the Indian Act
- 2015 June 2nd, We are guided by the [National Truth and Reconciliation Commission's \(TRC\) 94 Calls to Action](#), and make explicit connections to [Education](#) as per calls to Action 62 to 65
- 2015 We are guided by the complete [National Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Final Reports](#), and its Volume 4 of Survivor Accounts outlining *Deaths and Unmarked Graves*
- 2015 We are guided by the TRC's final report, calling for the UN Declaration to be the framework for [reconciliation](#) in Canada and for its adoption at all levels of government.
- 2019 [Indigenous Languages Act](#) received Royal Assent
- 2019 Class Action Lawsuit for Indian Day School Announcement
- 2021 We pause to commemorate the [215 Kamloops Indian Residential School](#)
- 2021 the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) received Royal Assent, and thereby legally advanced the UN Declaration's implementation; and furthermore;
- 2023 [The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act: Action Plan](#)
- 2022 We are encouraged by the recognition of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, September 30th
- 2026 In June, we celebrate the first cohort of Indigenous students who will graduate without the threat of forced attendance at Residential Schools

Ontario - Ontario and locally relevant context

- 1828 The Mohawk Institute opens as a day school for boys
- 1831 Mohawk Institute reopens as the longest running residential school in Canada by the Anglican churches
- 1970 We recognize the closure of the [Mohawk Institute Residential School in Brantford, ON](#)
- 1989 MCFN and Six Nations held a school [Boycott](#) to ensure safe schools for their children
- 1996 We recognize the closure of Canada's last Residential School whilst the funding formula for Indian Day Schools changed
- 1996 The Ontario College of Teachers was created by the [Ontario College of Teachers Act](#)
- 2007 We are guided by the [Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework](#)
- 2008 The professional designation "Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT)" was introduced
- 2014 We are guided by the [Implementation Plan: Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework](#)
- 2019 We are guided by the provincial [Ethical Standards & the Standards of Practice of the Teaching Profession \(OCT\)](#)
- 2022 We are guided by provincial [Restorative Journey: Indigenous Educational Wellness \(OCT\)](#)
- 2023 We are encouraged that the Indigenous Education Lead was welcomed as a member of [HWDSB Executive Council](#).

Indigenous Education Circle (IEC) Guiding Principles:

- The [IEC](#) is guided by the principles of the [Host Nations](#) and broader contexts.

- [Indigenous Education Councils](#) “guide school boards and schools in building stronger relationships with communities, sharing information, identifying promising practices, and enhancing collaborative work to support Host Nation members, First Nations, Métis and Inuit student achievement and well-being. All school boards must have formal structures, such as IECs to support Indigenous Education in school boards” (Government of Ontario, n.d.).

HWDSB Guiding Principles outline the ways HWDSB will implement the commitments to Indigenous Education:

- We proceed with open minds, a willingness to learn, conscious of the gaps in historic truths.
- We are mindful of the need for sincere engagement, and we commit to our own ongoing learning.
- We are guided in the spirit of educational wellness, and in consultation and collaboration with the Indigenous Education Department as the liaison with local [Indigenous](#) community partners.
- We value each learner by actively seeing, hearing, and listening to them and reflecting on and responding to their educational wellness needs. Every Child Matters.

“I see it... [engaging with Indigenous Peoples in friendship] ...as initiatives created by Indigenous people for everyone. In that way, we transform the way Indigenous people in this country are perceived from a burden to a resource” (K. Doxtater, 2024).

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

Learners

HWDSB will support and provide guidance to every learner, honouring and practicing peace, friendship, and respect. As [Treaty Partners](#), we each represent a [Pillar in the Palisade](#). We work together with the intent to protect [Indigenous](#) and non-Indigenous learners. We value the unique *gifts/strengths*, and distinct cultural identity of each learner and provide them with the tools to:

- Identify their gifts/strengths.
- Nurture their gifts/strengths.
- Value their gifts/strengths.
- Identify, nurture and value their gifts/strengths and their whole selves in relation to their own respective home and/or urban [Indigenous](#) communities, [HWDSB Community](#), and broader community, and global village contexts.
- Co-author an individualized learning and wellness plan with HWDSB supports to reach their full potential.
- Create innovative responses and/or implement appropriate cultural responses and approaches to reflect, and respond to the needs of learners (e.g., Indigenous Critical Incident Response Team - ICIRT).
- Create learning environments conducive to improve well-being, achievement, and friendships among [Indigenous](#) and non-Indigenous learners.
- Promote [Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) and educational equity of access, opportunity, and outcome for [Indigenous](#) learners in the areas of:
 - Providing [strength-based learning](#) is conducive to promoting self-esteem.

- Identifying, honouring, and nurturing the gifts that each learner brings to contribute to our village (i.e., classroom, school, HWDSB, and broader community environmental context).
- Fostering creativity, critical thought, and choice, through an individualized and co-authored learning plan.
- Upholding [Indigenous](#) epistemologies, methodologies, pedagogies, and wholistic learning opportunities, while ensuring the utilization and application of the [4 'A's: Accuracy, Authenticity, Accountability to all levels of community and Appropriateness](#).
- Teaching literacy and numeracy.
- Offering support and guidance to encourage meaningful engagement, successful completion, and retention of students in school.
- Contributing to increased number of commencement and graduates.
- Creating opportunities for engagement, and active participation.
- Supporting advancement to post-secondary studies reflective of all pathways.
- Understanding the current and historic cultural, experiential, economic, social and political patterns of the urban [Indigenous](#) population, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations, Six Nations of the Grand River, and home First Nations that reside within the HWDSB community.

Parents, Caregivers, Families and Kinship Relations

We work together with the intent of nurturing meaningful and trusting relationships with caregivers, parents, families, communities, Host Nations, and Band Membership communities to:

- Honour their inherent rights to [self-determination](#) and [free, prior, and informed consent](#).
- Ensure they are seen, heard, respected, and that their contributions are valued.
- Create meaningful space to actively listen to understand their needs, ideas, and contributions to [Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) that is responsive and reflective.
- Practice [ethical engagement](#), consultation, and collaboration in school and system-based initiatives to ensure content and perspectives are locally informed, reflected, and responsive.
- Integrate [accuracy, authenticity, accountability and appropriateness](#) to [Indigenous](#) communities as cultural norms and protocols to working in-relationship with local [Indigenous](#) community members.
- Enable them to inform culturally relevant, responsive and nation-specific approaches to school and system policies, practices, and procedures.

[Indigenous Peoples and Treaty Partner Relationship](#)

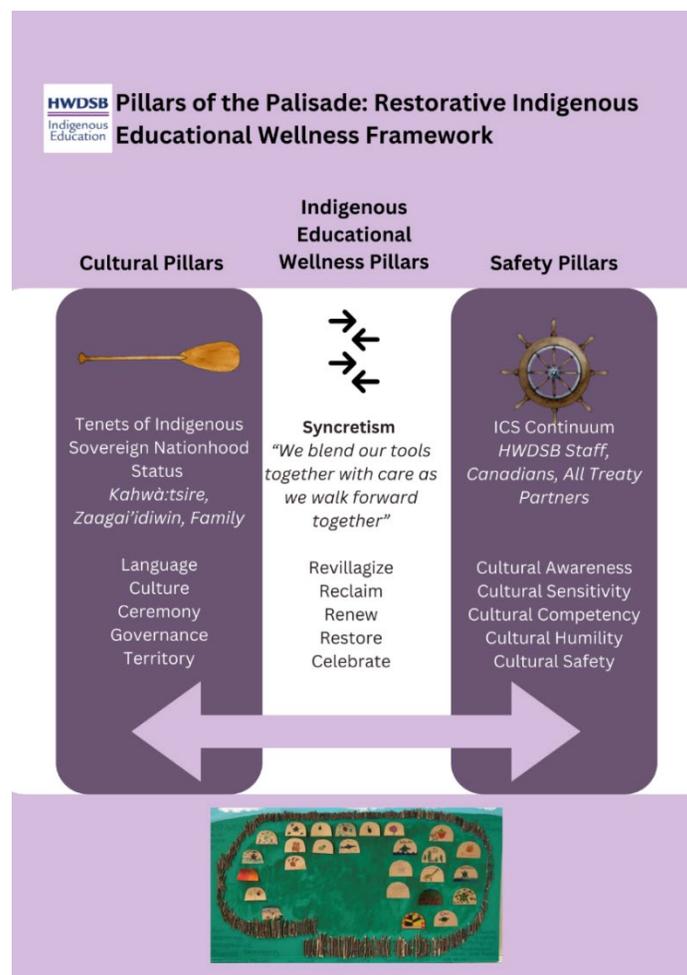
We work together with the intent to make space to foster respect and reciprocity rooted in [relational accountability](#) between HWDSB's Board of Trustees and staff, and the [Indigenous Education Council](#) (IEC) Kahwát:sire, Zaagi'idiwin Family Structure (as referenced in the Responsibility section) on Indigenous Education, [Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) and Truth and Reconciliation by:

- Reaffirming the historic covenant of peace, friendship, and respect as our foundation (The Two Row Wampum and the Silver Covenant Chain, also known as the Friendship belt).
- HWDSB will entrench the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (the UN Declaration, 2007) into these relationships.

- HWDSB will action the Calls to Actions from the 2015 [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) (TRC).
- HWDSB centers the Host Nations: Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Six Nations of the Grand River.
- HWDSB acknowledges [guest](#) First Nations (Status and Non-Status), Métis and Inuit Peoples.
- [Indigenous](#) Peoples, authentic Knowledges and protocols, resources, and contributions are treated with care, protection, [respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility](#).
- During this monumental time of Truth and Reconciliation, HWDSB remains committed to peace, friendship, and respect by including authentic Indigenous Education leadership and voice to ensure accuracy and accountability to the [IEC](#), Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River [Host Nations](#), as well as local [Indigenous](#) communities of Hamilton and the collective [HWDSB community](#).

RESPONSIBILITY:

The [Pillars of the Palisade](#): Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness Framework (see below) is a tool to enable us to consider the [relational accountability](#) between the [Indigenous Education Circle](#) (IEC) - Indigenous Education Kahwà:tsire, Zaagiídiwin, Family Structure - and HWDSB.



<p>The Indigenous Education Circle (IEC) Family Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Learners (CC:ROSE, Our Sustenance, and, Shakowennakarà:tats) • Elders, Knowledge Guardians, Language Speakers • Parents, Caregivers, Aunties, Uncles, Families (Kinship relations, extended clan families) • Local urban Indigenous community partners • Host Nations • Neighbouring Nations • Indigenous Staff employed by HWDSB • Indigenous Education Lead, accountable to the learners, IEC, the Indigenous Education Office (IEO) of the Ministry of Education, and the HWDSB Governance Structure. 	<p>Ethical Space of Engagement:</p> <p><i>Is where Indigenous and non-Indigenous Knowledge systems, worldviews, and values respectfully coexist and interact to foster meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and mutual understanding.</i></p> <p>Syncretism:</p> <p><i>We blend our tools with care as we walk forward together</i></p>	<p>HWDSB Governance and Leadership Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board of Trustees are accountable to: the constituents of their Wards, the Province of ON under the Education Act, Code of Ethics, and the Ministry of Education • Director of Education, Secretary to the Board of Trustees • Executive Council • Principals, Vice-Principals, System Leaders • School and System-based Support Staff • Administrators, Custodial Staff • Educators, Teachers • Parents, Families, and Communities • Students (Indigenous and non-Indigenous Learners)
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ACTION REQUIRED:

In their respective areas of influence, as competent and committed [Treaty Partners](#), every individual in each department will practice vigilance in identifying the gaps and areas of [Indigenous](#) omission and work collaboratively with the Indigenous Education Department on restorative solutions for meaningful inclusion and integration of [Indigenous](#) thought, pedagogy, voice, perspectives, and contributions.

For this we must:

- Maintain and recognize the [Indigenous Education Circle \(IEC\)](#) as the formal governing structure for Indigenous Education at HWDSB, who will lead the regular review, implementation, monitoring and revising of:
 - The [Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan \(IECSAP\)](#) as the aspirational and reconciliation document outlining short- and long-range plans for Indigenous Education.
 - The Board Action Plan (BAP) on Indigenous Education, and ensure alignment between HWDSB and Ministry of Education Priorities.
 - The Voluntary, Confidential Self-Identification Policy including student, parent/caregiver/guardian, and community engagement (e.g., IEC) adjacent to Student Census and through the position of data governance and [sovereignty](#).
 - The Indigenous Education Procedures.

- The Smudging Policy and Procedure to reflect the IECSAP and importance of protecting Sacred Ancestral Knowledges, Ceremonies, Sacred Items, Medicines, etc.
- An Indigenous Research Methodology Framework.
- Develop Indigenous Education Standards that are locally relevant and responsive to land/territory, and the worldviews and aspirations of the host nations and the IEC.

To further support these initiatives and engage in reciprocal engagement and action:

- The following documents contain important information to begin to reframe our knowledge and understandings of Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness through local Indigenous community-driven, and community-informed approaches: [Indigenous Education Circle's Strategic Action Plan \(IECSAP\)](#), [Restorative Journey](#), and the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report and Calls to Action](#)
- In alignment with the [UN Declaration](#), the Board of Trustees' meaningful engagement and ethical consultation with the [Indigenous](#) communities through the [IEC](#) and Indigenous Education Department is appreciated and is evidence of intentional steps towards respectful, reciprocal and reconciling relations.
- HWDSB System Leaders will integrate all five Strategic Directions of the [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#) into their Board Improvement Plans, School Improvement Plans, and department work plans, recognizing that everyone has a responsibility to action this work, and contribute to meaningful change and transformation.
- HWDSB will maintain and continuously evaluate structures of [accountability, accuracy, authenticity, , and appropriateness](#) by working collaboratively with and alongside the Indigenous Education Department on curriculum development, course delivery, unique program development (i.e., teacher selection, lesson plans, activities, vetting resources/learning materials), guest speakers, and assessment/evaluation approaches, etc. with the Indigenous Education Department leading as identified.

We can all:

- Enable individuals to position themselves in relation to [Indigenous](#) learners, families, communities, along historical and contemporary contexts to build an understanding and appreciation for [Indigenous](#) ways of knowing, being and doing. For example, Staff are invited to access the many tools provided on the [Indigenous Education Sharepoint](#) to support their own personal and professional growth. Students, families and community members are invited to access tools and resources on HWDSB's website.
- Enable individuals to recognize their own gifts/assets to nurture [syncretism](#) to support instructional practice, cross-curricular [Indigenous](#) teaching and learning approaches, and to contribute to [Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness](#).
- Implement system-wide improvement and proficiency on the protection of Indigenous Knowledges and pedagogies, and the care of all students, staff, educators, system leaders, community partners, and learners on the restorative journey of [Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) and [Reconciliation](#) with Indigenous leadership.

- Generate collaborative and proactive solutions and strategies to practice respectfulness, maintain friendships, and restore the “peace”.

PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Preamble

Research involving [Indigenous](#) peoples in Canada has been defined and carried out primarily by non-[Indigenous](#) researchers, and often supported colonial goals. The approaches used have not generally reflected [Indigenous Worldviews](#), and the research has rarely benefited [Indigenous](#) peoples or communities. As a result, [Indigenous](#) peoples continue to regard research, particularly research originating outside their communities, as extractive and exploitative.

In support of autonomous [Indigenous](#) Nations, in an effort to build [trust](#), and to decolonize, [re-villagize](#) and re-Indigenize research, assessment and, more generally, the measurement of progress within HWDSB, the progress indicators listed below aim to reorient indicators to align more closely with the values of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility, as well as an [Indigenous Worldview](#) centered on interdependence, and interconnectedness.

For these reasons, some of the assessment measures listed below will include [Indigenous](#) methodologies and approaches, which may look very different from assessment measures in other HWDSB policies.

Through individual and collective commitment to professional learning and development and ongoing capacity-building with respect to [Indigenous](#) Knowledges and ways of knowing, being and doing, and through [ethical engagement](#), cooperation and partnerships with the [Indigenous Education Circle](#): [Indigenous](#) learners, families, communities, host nations and organizations; and the Ministry of Education’s Indigenous Education Office, HWDSB will:

Canoe Assessment	Intended Outcome	Ship Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP) • Board Action Plan (BAP) on Indigenous Education • Voluntary Confidential Self-Identification of Indigenous Learners • PowerBI data • Graduation/Commencement Rates • Credit Accumulation 	Improved Indigenous student achievement and well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) • Board Improvement Plan (BIP) • Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP) • Student Census • Disproportionality Data • School Climate Survey • Health and Peer Relations Survey • School Improvement Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP) • Board Action Plan (BAP) on Indigenous Education • Voluntary Confidential Self-Identification of Indigenous Learners • Cultivating Community: Reclaiming Our Spaces in Education (CC:ROSE); Our Sustenance; and; Shakowanna'kará:tats • Graduation/Commencement Rates • Credit Accumulation 	Promote Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness and educational equity of access, opportunity and outcome for Indigenous learners .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) • Board Improvement Plan (BIP) • Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP) • Student Census • Disproportionality Data • School Climate Survey • Health and Peer Relations Survey • School Improvement Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP) • Board Action Plan (BAP) on Indigenous Education • Graduation/Commencement Rates • Credit Accumulation • Enrollment in Indigenous Studies Courses 	Improving and expanding knowledge of all students and educators on Indigenous and Host Nations' histories, perspectives, contributions and ways of knowing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) • Board Improvement Plan (BIP) • Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP) • Student Census • Disproportionality Data • Enrollment in Indigenous Studies Courses • Enhanced system-level supports and planning on Indigenous Education priorities • School Climate Survey • School Improvement Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened relationship with Indigenous Education Circle and its Membership 	Continued cultivation and nurturing of meaningful relationships alongside local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HWDSB Employment Equity Audit • We All Count

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Education Kahwà:tsire, Zaagi'idiwin, Family Sustainable Structure • Mutual Agreements of Understanding • Third Party Partnerships 	<p>urban Indigenous community of Hamilton-Wentworth and Host Nations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Climate Survey • Increased understanding of roles and responsibility as Treaty Partners. • Increased individual and collective system-capacity of reconciliatory efforts towards Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness. • Increased appreciation, acceptance and validation of Indigenous Education, Knowledges and ways of knowing, being and doing as beneficial for everyone.
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TERMINOLOGY:

[The 4 'A's – Accuracy, Authenticity, Accountability to Indigenous Communities, and Appropriateness:](#)

Provide HWDSB Staff with a critical lens to eVALUate and select resources, speakers, and mixed media related to Indigenous content. This framework ensures that educational practices uphold Indigenous protocols, foster respectful relationships, and reflect the lived realities and authentic knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples. Vetting through the 4A's is not only about quality assurance; it is an act of relational responsibility that builds meaningful connections to Indigenous Peoples, places, perspectives, and practices.

The 4 'R's: First proposed by [Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt](#) in 1991 as a guide for meaningful and intentional engagement of learners and a way non-Indigenous people can respectfully work alongside Indigenous peoples and communities. They are defined as follows:

- **Respect:** The foundation of the Four 'R's. It means recognizing the inherent value and dignity of all people, including Indigenous peoples and their knowledge. Respect also involves acknowledging and honouring the history and traditions of Indigenous peoples, including their unique ways of knowing, being, and doing. By demonstrating respect, non-Indigenous people can create a safe and welcoming space for Indigenous knowledge to be shared and valued.
- **Relevance:** means recognizing the importance of Indigenous knowledge and culture in today's world. Indigenous knowledge is grounded in centuries of lived experience and is deeply connected to the land and environment. By recognizing the relevance of Indigenous knowledge, non-Indigenous people can gain a deeper understanding of their own place in the world and their responsibility to care for the environment.
- **Reciprocity:** means recognizing that relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples must be based on mutual respect, understanding, and benefit. Reciprocity involves giving and receiving in equal measure and recognizing the importance of Indigenous knowledge and culture in shaping our collective future. By practicing reciprocity, non-Indigenous people can build stronger relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities

- **Responsibility:** means recognizing the role that non-Indigenous people have in creating a more just and equitable society for all. Responsibility involves acknowledging the harms of colonization and working towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. It also means taking action to address the ongoing social, economic, and environmental issues facing Indigenous communities. (Office of Professional Learning, University of British Columbia, n.d.).

Assimilation: Policies intended to terminate the cultural, social, economic, and political distinctiveness of Indigenous peoples by absorbing them into mainstream Canadian life and values (Indigenous Foundations, University of British Columbia, 2019).

Autonomy: Indigenous Peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing autonomous functions (Indigenous Peoples and Development Branch, Division for Inclusive Social Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). **Celebrate:** Celebrate accuracy, authenticity, accountability and appropriateness to local/host Indigenous communities, by advancing Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness, while reconciling our role as Indigenous Peoples and treaty partners ([IECSAP](#), Pillar).

Collective Rights: The inherent rights which Indigenous peoples have practiced and enjoyed since time immemorial. Each First Nation historically functioned as a distinct society, so there is no one official overarching ‘Indigenous’ definition. In general, rights to the land, rights to sustenance and subsistence resources and activities, the right to self-determination and self-government/governance, and the right to practice one’s own culture and customs including language, ceremony and/or beliefs. Collective rights are the result of Indigenous peoples’ own occupation of their ancestral home territories as well as ongoing social structures, patterns, political and legal systems. Therefore, collective Indigenous rights are separate and distinct from rights afforded to non-Indigenous citizens under Canadian common law and were to be protected in Indigenous/Crown treaties. It should be noted that inherent rights were entrenched with responsibility. For example, Sewatokwà:tsera/the One Dish treaty agreement outlines the rights to utilize the entities that Mother Earth carries on her body, to share the sustenance and to protect her, to ensure future generations will be able to practice these same rights.

Colonialism: The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with ‘*unsettlers*’¹⁰, and exploiting it economically. In Canada, this historically and currently means that Western European-derived ways of being, believing, knowing, and doing are implicitly or explicitly imposed as the standard or norm. Colonialism remains embedded in the legal, political and economic context of Eurocentric Canada today, and in the lived experience of marginalized and systematically oppressed Indigenous peoples. For example, the 1876 Indian Act and the Canadian institutions known as Indian Residential “Schools”, and “Indian Day Schools”, historic provincial child welfare misapplications commonly known as ‘60’s Scoop’, and non-Indigenous peoples’ refusal to acknowledge the inherent land and foundational treaty rights and agreements made with Indigenous Nations continues to contribute to this legacy.

¹⁰ Term used in place of “settler” as Indigenous Peoples don’t see colonization as settling anything.

Compassion: Leading with peace, friendship and love creates space for compassionate accountability, where we are responsible to one another in creating a culture of care (HWDSB [MYPSP](#), Value).

Cultivating Community: Reclaiming Our Spaces in Education (CC:ROSE): is an Indigenous student-centered, -focused and -led leadership and learning community for students in Grades 7-12. Its purpose is to foster a restorative, supportive, inclusive, and culturally grounded environment for Indigenous learners across HWDSB, tethered to the guiding principles of authenticity, accuracy and accountability to all levels of community. CC:ROSE nurtures community through a range of cultural activities and workshops. This includes: cooking, dancing, making traditional clothes, items, and participating in traditional games, as well as listening to teachings, meeting Elders, Knowledge Holders, Language Protectors, and Residential School Survivors. From the Indigenous worldview: CC:ROSE operates from a kinship model and as an extended family structure. Representing the Indigenous student body of HWDSB, CC:ROSE members collectively engage in the governing processes that “raise the Shakowennakarátats” – uplifting and amplifying the voices of their community - through consensus-based decision-making. Inspired by *Our Sustenance*, also known as the Three Sisters: Corn, Beans and Squash; CC:ROSE functions within a shared, interconnected, scaffolding leadership model. This model supports the creation of sustainable systems and structures that respond to the broader educational needs, holistic health, well-being and success of Indigenous learners throughout HWDSB.

Cultural genocide: Is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identify from one generation to the next (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 1).

Decolonization: In Canada, decolonization is related to Indigenous people reclaiming and restoring their culture, land, language, laws, relationships, knowledge, and a reaffirmation of traditional governance. Decolonization is also associated with other relationships between groups of people within Canada and in other countries and contexts around the world and can be linked to broader principles of inclusion and equity. Canada’s identity as an ‘*unsettler*’, colonial state complicates the task of decolonization, since the original colonizers are still here and acts of colonization continue to persist. Graham Smith resists the term to describe transformational change, as the term decolonization is a “reactive notion; it immediately puts the colonizer and the history of colonization back at the “centre”. In moving to transformative politics we need to understand the history of colonization, but the bulk of our work and focus must be on what is it that we want, what [it] is we are about and to “imagine” our future (Cote-Meek, 2020, p. 162).

Dignity: Reciprocity, anti-racism and anti-oppression lead to a just and equitable learning community, where every person is included, respected and valued (HWDSB [MYPSP](#), Value).

Dominant group: The group at the top of the social hierarchy. In any relationship between groups that define each other (men/women, able-bodied/person with disability), the dominant group is valued more highly...Dominant groups set the norms by which the minoritized group is judged. Dominant groups have

greater access to the resources of society and benefit from the existence of the inequality (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 223)

Ethical Space of Engagement: Refers to the concept and practical framework where Indigenous and non-Indigenous Knowledge systems, worldviews, and values respectfully coexist and interact to foster meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and mutual understanding. It emphasizes creating a shared space that acknowledges historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism, and where relationships are built on principles of respect, humility, reciprocity, and relational accountability (Ermine, 2007). This space is designed to facilitate critical reflection, ethical relationship-building, and respectful decision-making, prioritizing Indigenous leadership and sovereignty. It encourages shared responsibility for both knowledge protection and co-creation, ensuring Indigenous voices and knowledges are validated and not exploited. The core of the ethical space involves ongoing dialogue, transparency, and the recognition of Indigenous concepts of knowing, being, and doing—fostering an environment of trust, cultural safety, and genuine partnership (Ermine, 2007; Indigenous Engagement Institute, 2024; Lindstrom, 2022).

Eurocentric ideology (Eurocentrism): Eurocentrism has been defined as an attitude, conceptual apparatus, or set of empirical beliefs that frame Europe as the primary engine and architect of world history, the bearer of universal values and reason, and the pinnacle and therefore model of progress and development. In Eurocentric narratives (ScienceDirect, n.d.), the superiority of Europe is evident in its achievements in economic and political systems, technologies, and the high quality of life enjoyed by its societies (Sundberg, 2009). Honorable Justice Murray Sinclair talks about the twin myths of European superiority and Indigenous inferiority. Verna St. Denis references Ng (1993)'s assertion that the ideology of European superiority was deployed to justify the subordination of Aboriginal People and had material consequences, as it justified the taking of Indigenous land, the confinement of Aboriginal people to reserves, and their subjugation to Christian education (St. Denis, 2007). Other such examples of Eurocentric ideologies include the assertions that Indigenous peoples were uncivil, child-like and dependent upon the paternalistic control of Europeans, and inconsequently justified actions such as assimilative education (Bagshaw, Cherubini & Dockstader, 2022).

For-Indigenous-By-Indigenous: Refers to an approach in which programs, policies, and solutions are created and led by Indigenous Peoples, specifically for the benefit of Indigenous communities. This framework centers Indigenous voices, upholds the principle of self-determination, and ensures that initiatives are culturally grounded and community driven. It empowers Indigenous Nations to lead the work of the People, for the People, in ways that reflect their values, knowledge systems, and priorities.

Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC): Emphasizes the importance of recognizing and upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples and ensuring that there is effective and meaningful participation of Indigenous peoples in decisions that affect them, their communities and territories. More specifically, FPIC describes processes that are *free* from manipulation or coercion, *informed* by adequate and timely information, and occur sufficiently *prior* to a decision so that Indigenous rights and interests can be incorporated or addressed effectively as part of the decision-making process - all as part of meaningfully aiming to secure the consent of affected Indigenous peoples (Department of Justice Canada, n.d.).

Genocide: Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (United Nations, 1948).

The Great Law: Teachings of Peace, Good mind and Equity – the foundations of being Haudenosaunee as shared by the Peacemaker (Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 2022). *As translated by Tehahenteh as Ka’nikonhrí:yo* - The Good Mind, *Skén:nen* - Peace (healthy mind, healthy body), and *Ka’satsténhsera* - Strength through Unity. This is sacred knowledge for Indigenous peoples only, and is not intended to be adopted or co-opted into teaching and learning spaces without responsible considerations, ethical engagement and consultation with the Indigenous Education Department.

Guest Nation members: Indigenous peoples who are guests and/or visitors to this territory.

Hegemony: “The imposition of dominant group ideology onto everyone in society. Hegemony makes it difficult to escape or to resist believing in this dominant ideology, thus social control is achieved through conditioning rather than physical force or intimidation” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

HWDSB Community: Students, staff, parents, guardians, caregivers, trustees, community advisory committee members, school council members, permit holders, vendors, service providers, contractors, volunteers, visitors, all other persons who are invited to, access or provide services, or attend Board and school events and any person or entity who enters into an agreement or uses school board property.

HWDSB Executive Council: Refers to the senior leadership team who are responsible for directing school board operations and implementing policies across the system. Together, they support student achievement and ensure compliance with the Ontario Education Act.

Ideology: “The big, shared ideas of a society that are reinforced throughout all of the institutions and thus are very hard to avoid believing. These ideas include the stories, myths, representations, explanations, definitions, and rationalizations that are used to justify inequality in society. Individualism and Meritocracy are examples of ideology” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p.224).

Indian: The legal definition of "Indian" in the [Indian Act](#) (Government of Canada, 1985) refers to a person who is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an. This legal identity, known as "Indian status," is determined by the government-maintained Indian Register based on criteria outlined in Section 6 of the Act, not solely on ancestry.

Indigenous: A Latin term meaning “born of the land” or “springs from the land”. When you create something from an Indigenous perspective, you are creating it from that environment, from that land that it sits on. Indigenous peoples’ traditions and customs are shaped by the environment, the land, their relationship; their spiritual, emotional, and physical relationship to that land. It speaks to them; it gives

them their responsibility to stewardship (Wilson, 2020, p.88). Currently the preferred collective name for the original people within Canada and their descendants. This includes First Nation (Status and Non-status), Métis and Inuit peoples.

Indigenous Education Circle (IEC): Is also referred to as the Indigenous Education Kahwà:tsire, Zaagi'idiwin, Family and is a structure that recognizes all of our kinship relations that we are accountable to. It is inclusive of participation of host nations (Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee) and local urban Indigenous community of Hamilton, Indigenous students, families as well as extended community support networks ranging from Indigenous community service agencies to Elders/Knowledge Guardians to cross-sector representation in the fields such as Health, Justice, and higher Education.

Indigenous Education Councils: Guide school boards and schools in building stronger relationships with communities, sharing information, identifying promising practices and enhancing collaborative work to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit student achievement and well-being. All school boards must have formal structures such as IECs to support Indigenous Education in school boards (Government of Ontario, (n.d.).

Indigenous Worldviews: “A worldview can pertain to an individual, group, or society. Overall, a worldview is a set of beliefs and values that are honoured and withheld by a number of people. A worldview includes how the person or group interacts with the world around them, including land, animals, and people. Every person and society has a worldview. Many societies pass on their worldview to their children to ensure worldview continuity. As people interact and learn from one another, it is not uncommon for them to acquire the beliefs of other worldviews. Worldviews evolve as people and societies evolve” (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2022).

Joy: Curiosity, play and fun are catalysts for meaningful student learning outcomes and support joyful and enriching experiences (HWDSB [MYSP](#), Value).

Kaná:ta: Mohawk term for “Village”, commonly known as “Canada”.

Local Host Nations/Communities: Refers to the responsibility of ethical engagement with the local Anishinaabe community, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the local Haudenosaunee community, Six Nations of the Grand River, and local urban Indigenous communities that call Hamilton-Wentworth home.

Ontarí:io: Huron term for “beautiful lake”, commonly known as “Ontario”

Oppression: The combination of prejudice and institutional power which creates a system that discriminates against some groups (often called “target groups”) and benefits other groups (often called “dominant groups”). Examples of these systems are racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, and anti-Semitism. These systems enable dominant groups to exert control over target groups by limiting their rights, freedom, and access to basic resources such as health care, education, employment, and housing ([HWDSB Social Work](#)).

Palisade Model: Our message to learners is that we each represent *a pillar in the palisade* that surrounds our ancient village. Even though we do not live in the ancient villages anymore, we can understand they

are homelands where we can still carry ourselves with the dignity of our ancestors. We are responsible for individual contributions to protecting what our ancestors placed in that canoe as part of the Two Row Wampum treaty of eternal peace and friendship: language, culture, ceremony, governance, and territory. We are also responsible for fulfilling the original instruction “to help the people” (Doxtater, 2021).

Protected Knowledge: Refers to respecting and honouring the collective knowledge of all Indigenous nations and communities passed on by Elders/Knowledge Holders/Traditional Teachers, storytellers, artists, musicians, architects, botanists, astronomers, scientists, law makers, traditional governance keepers etc. from generation to generation in the areas of Ancestral Knowledge, wisdom, traditional teachings and cultural practices. Local Elders typically share information when the recipient is considered ready and willing.

Racism: A set of erroneous assumptions, opinions and actions stemming from the belief that one race is inherently superior to another. Racism may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals ([HWDSB Anti-Black Racism Policy](#)).

Reclaim: Displace intergenerational shame, fear and trauma with our inherent intergenerational wellness as we reclaim our knowledges, pedagogies, culture(s), language(s), and laws ([IECSAP](#), Pillar).

Reconciliation: In Canada, the term was used by the federal government when it was required to establish the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) as part of the [Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement](#). It has come to describe attempts made by individuals and institutions to raise awareness about colonization and its ongoing effects on Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation also refers to efforts made to address the harms caused by various policies and programs of colonization. For some, the word represents an opportunity to reflect on the past, to heal and to make right. For others, however, current gestures of reconciliation are merely performative, and lack meaningful action to address the harms done by colonization. Ideally, reconciliation is something that both parties would agree to, as opposed to having it announced, ordered, or proclaimed.

Relational Accountability: Being accountable to your relations means that the researcher has a vested interest in the integrity of the methodology (*respectful*) and the usefulness of the results if they are to be of any use in the Indigenous community (*reciprocity*) (Wilson, 2020, p.77). The methodology needs to be based in a community context (*be relational*) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action) (Wilson, 2020, p. 99).

Renew: Renew respectful relationships with treaty partners, reaffirming that our shared roles and responsibilities continue ([IECSAP](#), Pillar).

Restore: Restore our original instructions to provide guidance and support to every learner to protect Mother Earth and to help the people ([IECSAP](#), Pillar).

Restorative Indigenous Education: We celebrate Indigenous Knowledge, pedagogies, ways of knowing, ways of celebrating, ways of expressing, and applying that knowledge while no longer living in fear from reprimand or punishment. This restorative education model offers a tempered learning environment that

reflects true reconciliatory actions, and the re-emergence of Indigenous Knowledge and pedagogies that communities were deprived of for so long ([Doxtater, 2021](#)).

Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness: This monumental time of truth and reconciliation affords us the opportunity to work as Treaty Partners and create models that honestly strengthen our relationships. We are at a place in history where we can reframe the discourse to commemorate the past, educate the present, and contribute to the wellness of the current and future generations of all treaty partners ([Doxtater, 2021](#)). In the HWDSB context, we reconcile the consequences of Eurocentrism in schooling and reinforce the DIRE need of restoring Ancestral Knowledge systems through engaging in processes of Decolonizing, Indigenizing, and Revillagizing for *total* Educational Wellness, benefitting both Indigenous Peoples and all Treaty Partners. Together, we will “honour our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation by nurturing respectful and reciprocal relationships among Indigenous Peoples and Treaty Partners, and by cultivating intergenerational healing and wellness in a restorative education system” ([Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#)).

Revillagize: Displace decolonize and is the next step toward healing. The people will have the frame of mind our ancestors had when living in the ancient villages ([IECSAP](#), Pillar).

Self-determination: The right of Indigenous Peoples to manage their affairs, provide stewardship over the land, maintain a cultural and political community, and uphold government-to-government relations with all other nations, including present-day nation states. The criteria for maintaining nationhood status, language, culture, ceremony, governance, and territory, must be honored.

Settler colonialism: A structure that assumes the assimilation of Indigenous Peoples into mainstream society (Allan & Hackett, 2022, p. 41).

Seven Sacred Teachings: “A set of Anishinaabe guiding principles passed down from generation to generation to guide the Anishinaabe in living a good life in peace and without conflict” (Seven Generations Education Institute, 2021). This is sacred knowledge for Indigenous peoples only, and is not intended to be adopted or co-opted into teaching and learning spaces without responsible considerations, ethical engagement and consultation with the Indigenous Education Department.

- Zoongide’ewin: Zoongi =solid, strong; De’e = a form of heart; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated to “to live with a solid, strong heart.” Commonly summarized as *Bravery*.
- Gwayakwaadiziwin: Gwayak = correctly, straightly, and rightly; Aadizi = he/she lives; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated to “to live correctly and with virtue.” Commonly summarized as *Honesty*.
- Dabasendiziwin: Dabas = low or lower; End = pertaining to thought; Izi = state or condition; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated as “to think lower of oneself in relation to all that sustains us.” Commonly summarized as *Humility*.
- Zaagi’idiwin: Zaag = to emerge, come out of flow out; Idi = in a reciprocal way; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated to “unconditional love between one another including all of Creation, humans and non-humans.” Commonly summarized as *Love*.

- **Manaaji’idiwin:** Manaaji = to go easy on someone; Idi = in a reciprocal way; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated to “to go easy on one another and all of Creation.” Commonly summarized as *Respect*.
- **Nibwaakaawin:** Ni = the soul within; Waa = pertaining to sight; Kaa = an abundance; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated to “to live with vision.” Commonly summarized as *Wisdom*.
- **Debwewin:** Deb = to a certain extent; We = sound through speech; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated as “to speak only to the extent, we have lived of experienced”. Commonly summarized as *Truth* (Seven Generations Education Institute, 2021).

Sovereignty: Indigenous peoples maintain a distinct identity as the only group who have nation-to-nation agreements with the Crown. Treaty and other rights and freedoms entrenched in [The Royal Proclamation of 1763](#) (Government of Canada, n.d.) and the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#) (Department of Justice Canada, 2025), related to land resources and protections, as well as the right to deal directly with the Crown. The preferred term is *autonomy*.

Strength-based learning: To nurture, acknowledge and empower Indigenous learners to develop their own gifts/talents based on their individual strengths through differentiated teaching, learning, and assessment practices.

Syncretism: The blending of our best tools as we walk forward together.

Systemic barrier: A barrier embedded in the social or administrative structures of an organization, including the physical accessibility of an organization, organizational policies, practices and decision-making processes, or the culture of an organization. These may appear neutral on the surface but exclude members of groups protected by the Human Rights Code ([HWDSB Anti-Black Racism Policy](#)).

Systemic discrimination: Patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage, advantage, or privilege for people of certain for groups ([HWDSB Anti-Black Racism Policy](#)).

Treaty: A legally-binding, nation-to-nation agreement. These treaties were expressed as promises and conveyed in wampum (purple and white beads of quahog shell) between peoples. They are sacred and are to be honored forever – “as long as the sun shines, as long as the grass grows, as long as the rivers flow”.

Treaty Partner: Everyone has a role and a responsibility as a treaty partner as we take this restorative journey towards Indigenous Educational Wellness together.

Trust: Humility and transparency build the trusted relationships, connections and education system necessary for growth, change and evolution (HWDSB [MYSP](#), Value).

Wholism: “The coming together of the four elements in life to form one single whole human entity encompassing the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical elements of wellbeing as reflected in the Medicine Wheel.... The term *wholistic* is more culturally safe and relevant, and may better reflect Indigenous perspectives, traditions and cultural practices versus the term *holistic*” (Bredin, Kaufman, Warburton, 2023).

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Subject: Educational Excursions

Executive Council Member Responsible: Simon Goodacre
Superintendent of Equity & Student Achievement



BACKGROUND

The Educational Excursions policy has been reviewed as part of the policy review cycle. Staff have made minor updates to language throughout the policy based on feedback from the committee last year.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Educational Excursions Policy be recommended for approval.

Educational Excursions

POL. 6.4

PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) believes that an equitable quality education includes the opportunity for all students to participate in educational excursions. HWDSB values the connection between educational excursions and the curriculum in extending and enriching the educational experience to assist students in their learning.

HWDSB further affirms that educational excursions must prioritize student well-being and safety, including both physical and emotional safety, through proactive planning and clear communication.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Every student is provided an opportunity to participate in educational excursions as appropriate.
- Every educational excursion should provide the opportunity to explore diverse cultures, the local community and beyond.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that equitable inclusion is incorporated in the planning and execution of all excursions in accordance with the *HWDSB Human Rights Policy 1.1 and Equity and Inclusion Policy 5.4*
- Educational excursions recognize the central role of local context, including access to land-based learning and cultural experiences that promote Indigenous Educational Wellness and Reconciliation.
- Every educational excursion is age-appropriate, and meets Board policies, procedures, Ontario curriculum expectations and adhere safety guidelines.
- Clear, timely, and transparent communication with parents, guardians, and caregivers is an essential component of all educational excursions.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- Ensure that educational excursions are accessible to all students, with barriers identified and addressed through intentional planning and system supports.
- Promote consistency and equity of opportunity for educational excursions across classrooms and schools.
- Ensure educational excursions are directly aligned with Ontario curriculum expectations and HWDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan.
- Strengthen student well-being by ensuring excursions are planned and supported to protect physical safety and emotional safety through anticipatory planning and communication.

Educational Excursions

POL. 6.4

RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education
Members of Executive Council
Principals and Vice-Principals

TERMINOLOGY:

Educational Excursion: A structured learning experience that occurs outside the school campus and is intentionally designed to enhance and enrich the overall learning experience for students while linked to the curriculum and/or HWDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan.

ACTION REQUIRED:

The Board shall establish and maintain a procedure for educational excursions that outlines roles and responsibilities, communication requirements, planning expectations, consent processes, and measures to support student safety, well-being, equity, and inclusion.

Educational excursions must demonstrate clear educational purpose and curriculum alignment, with transparent communication to students and families.

- Students must receive age-appropriate pre-excursion learning and preparation.
- Written informed consent from parents/guardians/caregivers is required for all excursions.

Excursions must be planned using approved Board processes and tools that address risk management, safety, accessibility, supervision, transportation, funding, and contingency planning.

- Planning must proactively identify and address barriers to participation, ensuring equitable access for all students.

The Board will implement monitoring and continuous improvement processes to evaluate excursion planning, approval, and implementation.

PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
Ensure all educational excursions are accessible to every student and directly aligned to Ontario curriculum expectations and/or HWDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan.	Principals will confirm, as part of the excursion approval process, that each proposed excursion demonstrates clear alignment to Ontario curriculum expectations and/or the HWDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan. Alignment will be documented using Board-approved planning and approval tools. Principals, and where appropriate

Educational Excursions

POL. 6.4

<p>Promote consistency and equity of opportunity for educational excursions across classrooms and schools.</p>	<p>Principals will provide oversight to ensure schools take a coordinated, school-wide approach to educational excursions, and that approval practices are applied consistently across classrooms. Superintendents will periodically review excursion patterns and approvals to monitor equity of opportunity across schools.</p>
<p>Ensure that educational excursions are accessible to all students, with barriers identified and addressed through intentional planning and system supports.</p>	<p>Principals, supported by superintendents, will review excursion plans during the approval process to confirm that barriers to participation have been identified and addressed through planning, accommodation, or system supports. Evidence of this review will be documented through established approval and planning tools.</p>
<p>Strengthen student well-being by ensuring excursions are planned and supported to protect physical safety and emotional safety through anticipatory planning and communication.</p>	<p>Principals will verify that excursion plans include documented risk management strategies, proactive communication with families, and appropriate student preparation to support physical safety and emotional well-being. Superintendents will periodically review a sample of approved excursions to monitor consistency and identify areas for improvement.</p>

REFERENCES:

Government Documents

Education Act—Part VI BOARDS, Duties & Powers

Education Act Regulation 298 OPERATION OF SCHOOLS – GENERAL

Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools (Ministry of Education – 2010)

Ontario Human Rights Code

Ontario Curriculum

Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) Regulations

Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA) Guidelines

Ontario School Boards' Insurance Exchange (OSBIE)

Highway Traffic Act - Section 32 – licensing

Subject: Staff Engagement Policy

Executive Council Member Responsible: Jason Alexander, Executive Officer of Human Resources & Staff Well-Being



BACKGROUND

Staff have reviewed the Staff Engagement Policy as part of the review cycle, with minor updates made to language throughout the policy.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Staff Engagement Policy be recommended for approval.

PURPOSE:

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to fostering a culture of staff engagement that advances student success, well-being, belonging, and excellence. It is understood that meaningful staff engagement is essential to creating the conditions for impactful learning, identity-affirming practices, and responsive systems that support every learner and every staff member in shaping an inclusive and supportive workplace.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Involve, respect, recognize and value staff members as partners in student success and well-being ensuring identity-affirming and inclusive workplaces where staff feel a sense of belonging.
- Foster trustful, respectful, and collaborative relationships across schools, departments, and roles, reflecting the interconnected nature of our work.
- Promote transparent, two-way communication and intentionally gather, respond to, and act on staff voice to strengthen HWDSB as a learning organization.
- Develop and sustain a professional workforce that reflects the diversity of the Hamilton-Wentworth community and aligns with HWDSB's commitment to Indigenous educational wellness and human rights, equity, and anti-oppressive practice.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- Provide all staff with opportunities for professional learning, leadership development and performance management to support continuous improvement and engagement for all employee groups.
- Engage staff in collaborative learning teams that create the conditions for student learning, support identity-affirming and culturally responsive practices, and honour Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and doing across schools and departments.
- Gather staff voice regularly to demonstrate our commitment to gathering input and to strengthen HWDSB as a learning organization.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education
Members of Executive Council
Principals, Vice-Principals, Managers

TERMINOLOGY:

Staff: All individuals employed by HWDSB on a full-time, part-time or occasional basis, for a specified or indeterminate period, who contribute to the achievement of Board priorities.

Staff Engagement: The extent to which staff feel valued, heard, supported, and connected to their work, colleagues, and the shared purpose of HWDSB, as informed by ongoing staff voice and census data.

Professional Learning: A comprehensive, continuous, and strategic approach to developing staff capacity, well-being, and leadership in alignment with Board priorities and evidence-informed practice.

ACTION REQUIRED:

This policy will support the way staff are motivated and encouraged to complete their work with commitment, satisfaction, pride and support for HWDSB’s Multi-Year Strategic Plan.

PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
Provide all staff with opportunities for professional learning, leadership development and performance management to support continuous improvement and engagement for all employee groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of accessible professional learning, leadership development, and performance management opportunities offered across employee groups and roles. • Participation data reflects equitable access and engagement across staff groups, disaggregated where appropriate. • Staff feedback indicates increased relevance, usefulness, and alignment of professional learning with Board priorities and individual growth needs. • Documentation demonstrates alignment between professional learning opportunities and HWDSB Strategic Directions and improvement priorities. • Staff survey data reflects increased confidence, engagement, and sense of professional growth over time.
Engage staff in collaborative learning teams that create the conditions for student learning, support identity-affirming and culturally responsive practices, and honour Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and doing across schools and departments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of regular staff participation in collaborative learning teams within and across schools and departments.

<p>Gather staff voice regularly to demonstrate our commitment to gathering input and to strengthen HWDSB as a learning organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular staff voice surveys and engagement processes are implemented, with participation rates tracked and trends monitored over time.• Survey data and feedback are analyzed and, where appropriate, disaggregated to identify patterns, strengths, and areas for improvement.• Evidence that staff input informs decision-making, planning, and continuous improvement at the school, department, and system levels.• Staff report feeling heard, respected, and informed about how their feedback is used through follow-up communications and reporting.
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REFERENCES

Government Documents

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
Ontario Human Rights Code