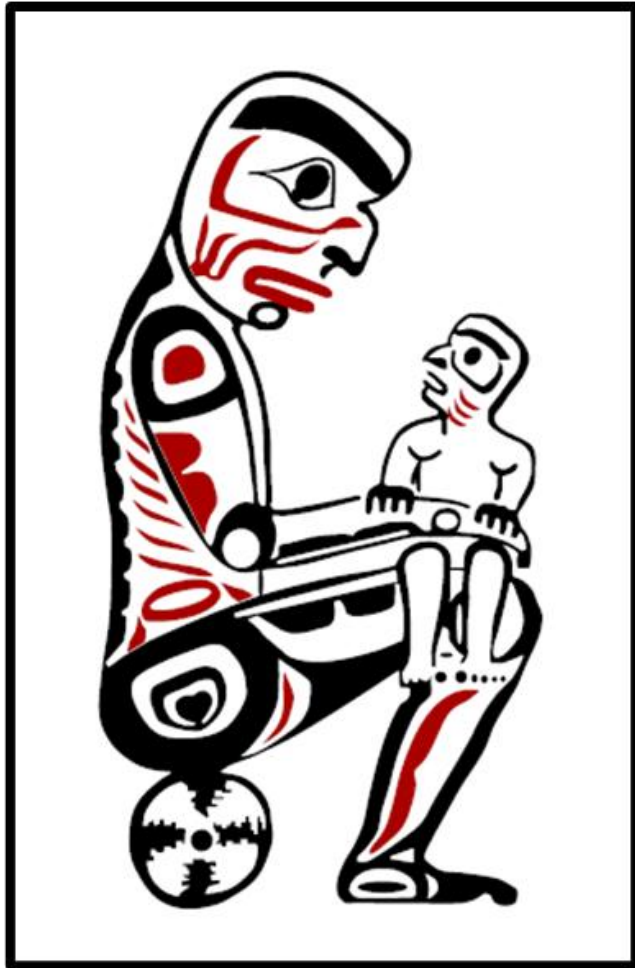


**Q'pethet Ye Tel:exw,  
Gathering to Understand:  
A Framework for Creating a Culture of Equity  
in MPSD**



- Kwakwaka'wakw Artist Roy J. Hanuse

Siwal Si'wes  
Indigenous  
Education  
Department  
*Our  
Forefathers'  
Teachings*



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***This document was created in the spirit of lets'e mot, lets'e thale and  
sqwá:lewel: a good mind, good heart, and good feeling.***



## Acknowledgement of Territories and of Indigenous Peoples

*Il stl'i kw'els spipetstexw kw'eset ite xwelmexwelh stexwlaq temexws ye Stó:lō mestiyexw.*

*Mission Public School District is located on the Traditional, Ancestral, Unsurrendered, and Shared territories of Stó:lō people, of Leq'á:mel, Semá:th, Máthxwi, Sq'éwlets and Qwó:ltl'el First Nations, stewards of this land since time immemorial.*

*Halq'eméylem is the language of this land and of Stó:lō ancestors. The place from where Halq'eméylem (Upriver dialect) originates is Leq'á:mel. The language comes from the land, and it has been this way since time immemorial.*

*We, as members of the Mission Public School District community, embrace our commitments to strengthening partnerships and relationships with all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.*

*Nous reconnaissons qu'en tant que partenaires d'apprentissage du conseil scolaire de Mission, nous travaillons et apprenons humblement sur les terres traditionnelles, ancestrales, non-cédées et partagées du peuple Stó:lō, des nations Leq'á:mel, Sema:th, Matheqwi, Sq'éwlets, et Qwó:ltl'el, qui sont les habitants de cette terre depuis des temps immémoriaux.*



Leq'á:mel



Sema:th



Matheqwi



Sq'éwlets



Qwó:ltl'el

**Traditional**, because these are the traditional lands upon which Indigenous ancestors walked and the lands upon which we walk today.

**Ancestral**, because these are the lands that were passed down from generation to generation, along with the stories told on and of the land.

**Unceded**, because these lands were taken, by no agreement.

**Shared**, because Indigenous peoples of these lands shared this land with non-human beings and shared by trade, the resources of the land with additional Indigenous groups.

**We acknowledge territory to:**

- **Share our awareness** of the presence of Indigenous peoples of this land, past and present, and the generational knowledge passed on by knowledge holders.
- **Acknowledge the past histories** of Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, including the intergenerational impacts of colonization, of the Indian Residential School system, of the Indian Day Schools, of the 60's scoop, and of assimilation policies of which the goal was cultural genocide.
- **Acknowledge current biases** including discriminatory laws, oppression, marginalization, deficit thinking and racism toward Indigenous peoples.
- **Recognize positive contributions** made by Indigenous peoples.
- **Show commitment to walk forward respectfully alongside, beside, behind and with** Indigenous peoples, accepting the responsibility to be living messages of anti-racism and equity for Indigenous peoples.

See [HERE](#) for the Story of the Land Acknowledgement.



## Acknowledgement of Additional Indigenous Groups

Mission Public School District and Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Education Department appreciates the vital role of all Indigenous peoples, groups, organizations, and associations residing within the lands of Leq'á:mel, Sema:th, Matheqwi, Sq'éwlets and Qwó:ltl'el First Nations and those residing in Mission, and involved in and/or connected to the organizations listed below, respectively:



- Fraser Valley Métis Association
- Métis Nation of BC
- Mission Friendship Centre

And:

- Lower St'át'imc Nations
- Members of the Inuit Community
- Members of all Indigenous groups whose ancestors originated on traditional Turtle Island territories (lands which are now known as Canada) and who currently reside on Stó:lō lands.
- Survivors of the former St. Mary's Indian Residential School

MPSD Contributions:

- Siwal Si'wes Family & Learning Partners
- Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Education Council
- Indigenous Learners of MPSD
- MPSD Educators
- The Board of Education, MPSD



## Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Education Council

Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Education Department works collaboratively with all schools to ensure that Indigenous learners are successful in Mission Public Schools. While promoting and respecting the traditional territory of the Stó:lō people, they help foster an awareness of and respect for all Indigenous peoples.

The Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Education Council includes representatives from the community at large including:

- Elected Co-Chairs
- Education Coordinators from local Nations
- Parents and Caregivers of Indigenous learners in MPSD
- Members of Indigenous Communities
- Indigenous Elders & Knowledge Holders and Sharers
- School Staff (by invitation only)
- One Member of the Board (Trustee)
- District Principal and Vice-Principal of Siwal Si'wes
- Administrative Assistant of Siwal Si'wes

### **The mandate of the Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Education Council is to:**

- represent interests in the design, implementation and assessment of programs and services to improve the school experience, academic achievement, and school success of Indigenous learners to better meet their needs.
- create an innovative and dynamic space for dialogue, discussions, learning and development of education of Indigenous learners of MPSD.
- help inform and support increased success in all areas of education for Indigenous learners of MPSD, including social, emotional, physical, and academic needs.
- recommend and facilitate the implementation of new programs to provide better service to Indigenous learners of MPSD.
- contribute to Equity Scan discussions, MPSD Policies and Procedures, and other Siwal Si'wes and/or MPSD initiatives.
- provide strong communication and connection with Nation Councils and additional Indigenous groups served by MPSD.

**\*\*Note:** We are in the process of reviewing and recreating the current Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Education Council model so it aligns with Ministerial Order 217/2024 - Indigenous Education Council Order (IEC Order) found [HERE](#).



## The Story of Siwal Si'wes: Our Forefathers' Teachings



In the late 1980's, the Late Agnes Giesbrecht, the Late Robert Charlie, and the Late Virginia Joe met to discuss the creation of a vision for the Indigenous Department of Mission Public School System. Heather Hansson (former District Counsellor for Indigenous Youth) and Mel Jack (former Indigenous Liaison Worker) requested self- taught Kwakwaka'wakw artist, the late Roy J. Hanuse, to create a design that would capture and portray the Indigenous Department of Mission Public Schools District. Once Roy completed the design, Mel and Heather then enlisted Dr. Gwen Point, who, in collaboration with Elders from Coqualeetza, named the design. The design was then gifted the name ***Siwal Si'wes: our forefathers' teachings***. A traditional ceremony was held at Fraserview Elementary School (now Fraserview Learning Centre) to celebrate the naming, with the Honourable Steven Point as the speaker of the house. *(Information received from Mel Jack & Heather Hansson, February 2020).*

### Our Mission

Working as a community, we will enhance learner empowerment by developing the skills, wellness, confidence, and self-reliance necessary for our children and youth to flourish and prosper throughout their life journey.

### Our Vision

Recognizing and nurturing strengths, learners will thrive as individuals, thus contributing to the well-being of their families and communities while preserving tradition.



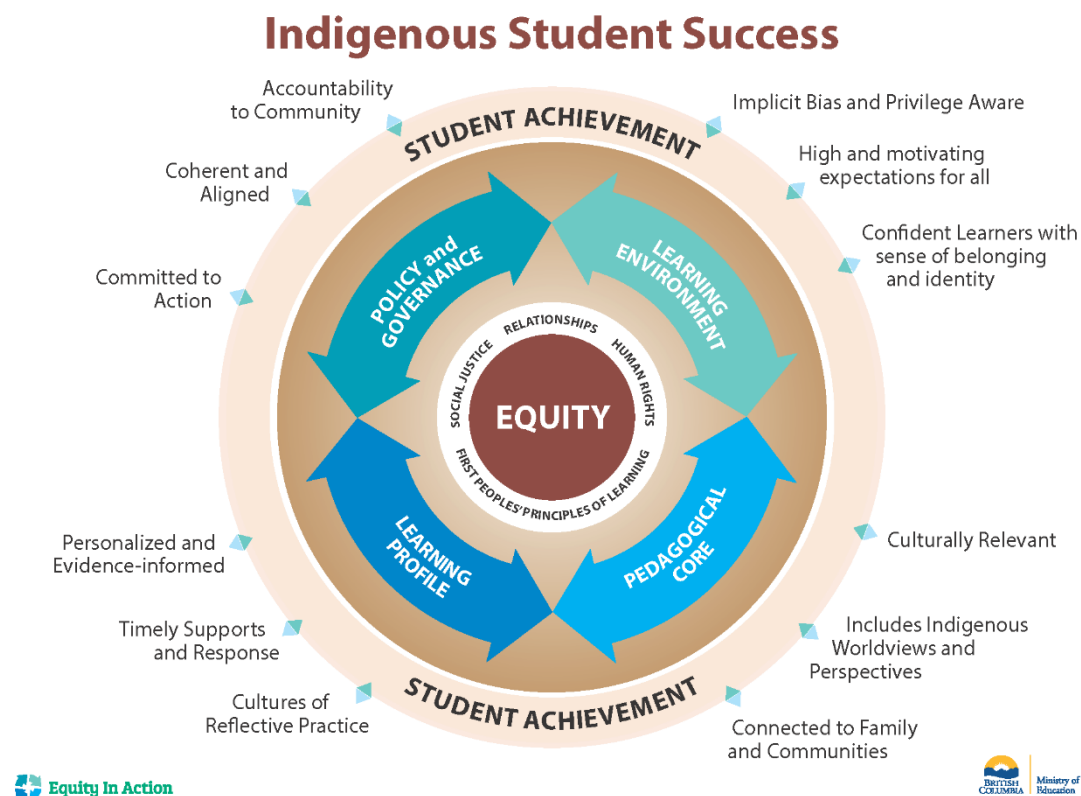
## What is the Equity Scan?

The Equity Scan began in 2016 by the Ministry of Education. The vision is to support school districts in identifying promising practices as well as addressing barriers impacting Indigenous learner achievement and success. It is a collective and collaborative decision-making, inquiry-based process involving genuine and meaningful self-assessment dialogue about educational experiences for Indigenous learners with the goal to create conditions for their success.

Four dimensions are explored in the Equity Scan process:

- **Learner Learning Profile** - key indicators of achievement and learner learning trajectories.
- **Policy and Governance** – processes, plans, and policies
- **Pedagogical Core** - experience of learners in relation to curriculum, the presence of relevant cultural experiences and values placed on Indigenous Worldviews and Perspectives
- **Learning Environment** – includes human and educator bias, learning spaces.

During the process and as a team, we scan current data trends, practices, processes, procedures, and results of Indigenous learners in MPSD, and develop an Equity Action Plan in service to Indigenous learners, families and communities.





## Why Equity?



### Truth & Reconciliation Calls to Action

In 2008, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement constituted and created Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). This Commission spent six years travelling to all parts of Canada to hear from more than 6,000 Indigenous peoples, surviving witnesses, who had been forcibly taken from their families as children and placed for much of their childhoods in Residential Schools. In 2015, the TRC released its final report including 94 Calls to Action. The focus was to lay the foundation for the important question of reconciliation.

***Now that we know about the legacy left by the Residential Schools, what do we do about it?  
How can the past be reconciled?***

Sections 62 & 63 of the TRC Calls to Action Report address tasks for educational institutions.

### Education for Reconciliation

62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

- i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve learners
- ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
- iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
- iv. Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:

- i. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
- ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
- iii. Building learner capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
- iv. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.

(-Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, 2015)

***The TRC laid the foundation for an urgency of change in the education system, with the intentional inclusion of Indigenous truths, histories, knowledges and worldviews in the classroom experience, a call to all educators to reimagine and 'restory' teaching and learning, with a shared responsibility in working toward anti-racism and social justice for Indigenous peoples.***





## The United Nations Declaration on the Rights in Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is a document of 46 Articles that describe and protect individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples around the world. It offers guidance on cooperative relationships with Indigenous peoples and addresses the rights of Indigenous peoples on issues such as: culture, identity, religion, language, health, education, and community.



In May 2016, the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs announced Canada is now a full supporter, without qualification, of the declaration. In Canada, it reinforces the Treaty relationships that exist between Indigenous peoples and the Crown and which form “the basis for a strengthened partnership....” The rights outlined in the *UN Declaration* “constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world” (Article 43).

*The following Articles are of importance to education:*

### Article 8:

1. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.

### Article 11:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.

### Article 12:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.

### Article 14

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.

3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

### Article 15

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories, and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.

2. States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

(-United Nations, 2008)



## BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The provincial government passed the legislation in November 2019 to implement the UN Declaration, which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission confirms as the framework for reconciliation.

The B.C. *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* aims to create a path forward that respects the human rights of Indigenous peoples while introducing better transparency and predictability in the work we do together.

It mandates government to bring provincial laws into harmony with the UN Declaration, providing transparency and accountability while bringing Indigenous peoples to the table for decisions that affect them, their families, and their territories.

(-Government of British Columbia, 2019)

*UNDRIP and the BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act call on educators to ensure that Indigenous children and youth have equitable access to learning opportunities and that Indigenous children and youth are seen, without discrimination, as capable, valued, contributing learners.*

## Professional Standards for BC Educators

BC Teacher's Council Professional Standard 9 is new, as of August 2019, and carries with it the aspiration and expectation that BC educators strive towards truth, reconciliation, and healing, acknowledging the history and contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples who have been on these lands now known as Canada.

**9 | Educators respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future. Educators contribute towards truth, reconciliation and healing. Educators foster a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and being, histories, and cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis.**

Educators critically examine their own biases, attitudes, beliefs, values and practices to facilitate change. Educators value and respect the languages, heritages, cultures, and ways of knowing and being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Educators understand the power of focusing on connectedness and relationships to oneself, family, community and the natural world. Educators integrate First Nations, Inuit and Métis worldviews and perspectives into learning environments.

(-Government of British Columbia, 2019)

*Standard 9 calls on educators to look inward and lean into the discomfort of our own personal biases, to acknowledge our personal privilege, to recognize our gifts and talents, to be allies of Indigenous peoples to work toward understanding First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, and to share our learning forward.*



## The Purpose of Indigenous Education

### **Ministry of Education Targeting Indigenous Funding**

*The Ministry of Education and Childcare provides enhanced funding to school age learners of Indigenous ancestry. Enhanced funding provides culturally appropriate educational programs and services to support the success of Indigenous learners. This policy is part of a larger policy framework to support the achievement of Indigenous learners.*

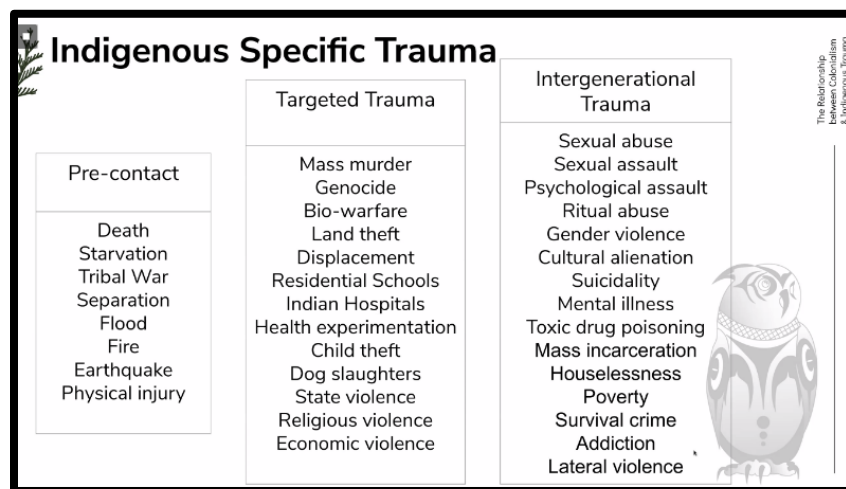
*Indigenous Education seeks to improve success and supports for Indigenous learners, and increase the presence of Indigenous culture, languages, and history for all learners. It also aims to help teachers bring Indigenous knowledge into their teaching practice.*

*Indigenous Education aligns with commitments to the: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, to the BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and BC Teacher's Council Professional Standard #9.*

### **Why do Indigenous learners receive enhanced services and supports?**

The answer to this question lies in a combination of several things.

*The history of this land we now call Canada and what it has tried to do to Indigenous peoples. This includes the Indian Residential School System, Indian Day Schools, 60's Scoop, the Indian Act and other laws designed to destroy Indigenous cultures. We have yet to address the current legacies of all of this. Len Pierre, Katzie educator, consultant, TEDx Speaker, social activist, change agent, & traditional knowledge holder, outlines Indigenous Specific Trauma, which is different than trauma experienced by non-Indigenous peoples. See below.*



This is not to place blame on Canadians, but it does place a reconciliatory responsibility on all Canadians to:

- learn the truths of the past, of the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and Canada
- identify untruths of Indigenous Peoples in Canada
- recognize personal bias and stereotypes that influence our thoughts and actions towards Indigenous Peoples
- recognize and address overt and systemic racism against Indigenous Peoples in all sectors of Canada.
- develop an understanding of how non-Indigenous Peoples continue to benefit from policies intended to dismantle cultures and assimilate Indigenous Peoples in Canada
- recognize Indigenous land rights and title, and self-determination.
- advocate for governments to meet past and current obligations entrenched in the Constitution, legislation, and treaties.
- respond to the Calls to Action of the *Truth and Reconciliation (TRC)*, the Articles pertaining to education in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*, the action plan of the *BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and to uphold *BC Teacher's Council Professional Standard #9*.

Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 explicitly recognizes and affirms the existing Indigenous and treaty rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Section 35 also indicates that the term 'Aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada.

*Systemic Racism (in its various forms) and specifically Indigenous-specific racism.* This is not about individual learners; it is about how the education system systemically has not been meeting needs of Indigenous learners as a group, and the barriers Indigenous learners face and inequities they experience in school.

It is about trying to address 'the long-term psychological, social, and multi-generational damage caused by being marginalized in your own lands, by having your land appropriated, by having your freedoms and rights systematically denied and/or restricted' (Manitoba Education & Training, 2017). It is about understanding how Non-Indigenous Peoples continue to benefit from policies that were intended to assimilate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. It is about a nation being responsive to the original inhabitants of this land.

Finally, Indigenous targeted funding is **not** about *learners in need*; it is about the harm caused by education systems (culturally and otherwise) to Indigenous learners, families, and communities.

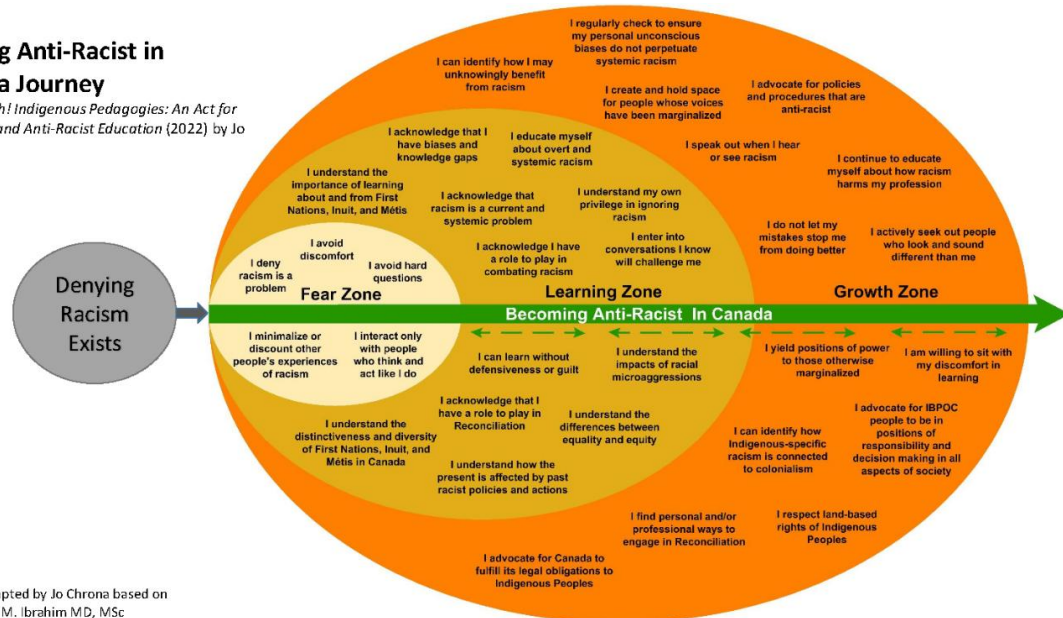
*-Adapted from Jo Chrona, October 6, 2022, email correspondence and Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies: An Act for Reconciliation and Anti-Racism Education*



## Reconciliation through Education

### Becoming Anti-Racist in Canada: a Journey

From *Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies: An Act for Reconciliation and Anti-Racist Education* (2022) by Jo Chrona



## Reconciliation Through Education

What does Reconciliation through Education mean?

Moving forward in Reconciliation:

- Means examining how overt, systemic, and epistemic racism play out in classrooms, schools, and districts.
- Asks us to understand how we may be engaging in actions that marginalize and denigrate Indigenous learners, families, and communities. When we place the blame for disparity in education outcomes on learners, families, or communities, we are reinforcing colonial narratives that have portrayed Indigenous Peoples as in need of fixing.
- Asks us to respond to the concerns and priorities of Indigenous leadership, rather than continuing to believe that non-Indigenous Peoples 'know best'.
- Asks us to remove and refrain from using resources that reflect stereotypes or misinformation about Indigenous Peoples in Canada.
- Change assumptions that Indigenous learners come to school with inherent deficits and recognize that they have innate gifts and abilities to be nurtured into growth.

-Adapted from *Wayi Wah! Indigenous Pedagogies; An Act for Reconciliation and Anti-Racist Education* – Jo Chrona





## Who is responsible for creating a Culture of Equity for Indigenous learners in MPSD?

***We all are.***

***Equity for Indigenous learners in MPSD is the responsibility of everyone, in whatever role you hold.***

Despite the work that has been done with Equity for Indigenous Learners in Mission Public Schools and the number of essential reads, documents created, and other resources shared, including relevant Calls to Action from the TRC, pertinent articles from UNDRIP, the Declaration Act of BC and BCTF Standard #9, there continue to be learning gaps within MPSD staff. Personal bias and stereotypes continue to interfere with the way we think about and interact with Indigenous learners and families, gaps in understanding and knowledge how both intergenerational trauma and Indigenous-specific racism intersect with systemic barriers Indigenous families face today. This continues to show up in schools - in classrooms, on the playground, on the bus, etc. Siwal Si'wes Staff continue to report challenges with other MPSD Staff in understanding why Indigenous learners receive enhanced services, and the roles and responsibilities of SWSW Staff members. Equity for Indigenous learners is everyone's responsibility and these gaps present challenges and barriers in our efforts to bring equity to Indigenous learners in MPSD. This can be difficult for Siwal Si'wes staff and becomes even more complex when this advocacy is challenged.



*Photo Credit: Vivian Searwar, the work of learners in École Christine Morrison Elementary*



## Equity Scan Beginnings

MPSD joined the Equity Scan Project in September 2019. The contributions made during the Enhancement Agreement meetings during the 2018/2019 school year and in the fall 2019 led directly into the Equity Scan Project. These contributions serve as overarching beliefs and commitments to Indigenous learners.

This work became: ***Q'pethet Ye Tel:exw: Gathering to Understand: A Framework for Creating a Culture of Equity***

The original Equity Scan Team included:

- Local Elders
- Community Members and Education Coordinators from Leq'á:mel, Matheqwi, Sq'éwlets and Qwó:lt'el Nations
- Community Members and Education Coordinators from the Métis community
- MPSD Staff:
  - Siwal Si'wes Staff
  - District Principal of Indigenous Education
  - Superintendent
  - Assistant Superintendent
  - Director & Members of Learner Services
  - Members of Human Resources
  - School Administrators
  - District Mentor Teachers
  - Educators (Classroom Teachers)
  - Members of the School Board (Trustees)

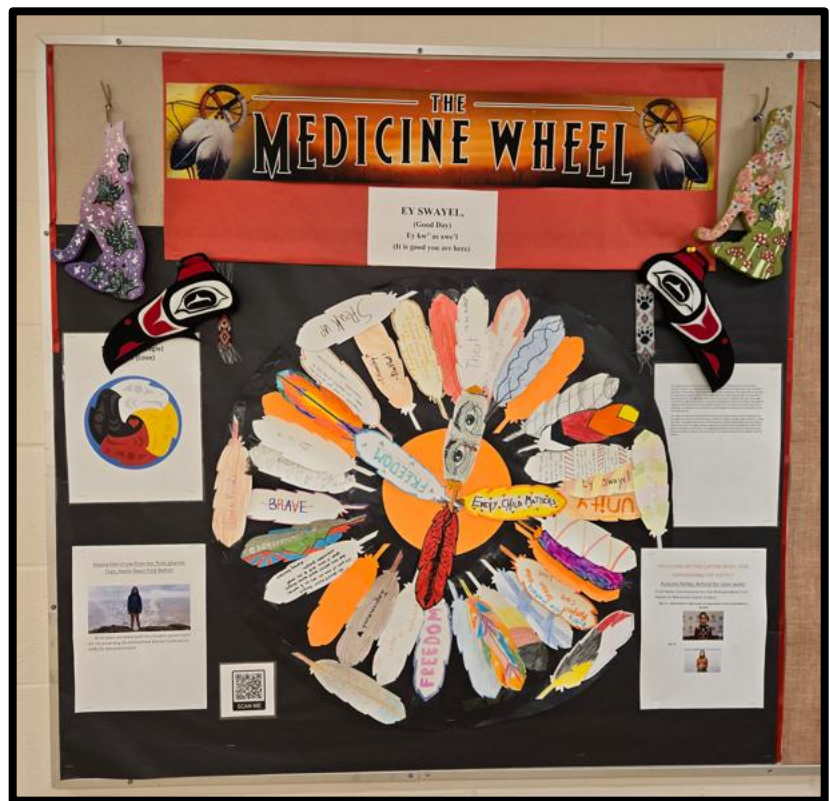


Photo Credit: Vivian Searwar, Fraserview Learning Centre





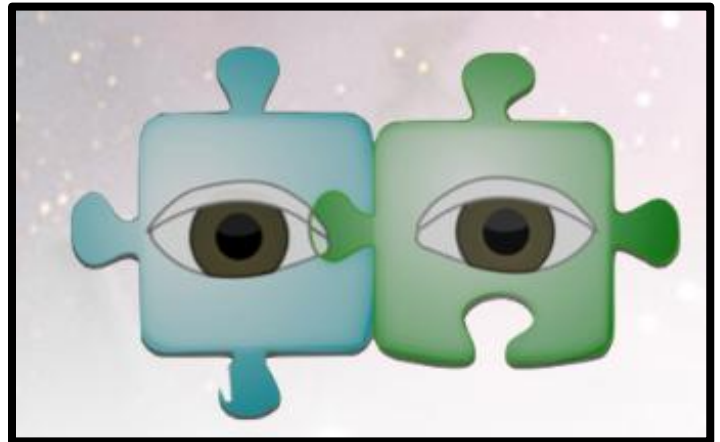
## Enhancement Agreement Emerging Themes

As we worked through the data collection process from the meetings held from September 2018 to December 2019, we considered the words wisdom of Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall, and the idea of Two-Eyed Seeing.

### Etuaptmumk – Two-Eyed Seeing

As we work toward equity for Indigenous learners, we create space for Two-Eyed Seeing. *Etuaptmumk* is the Mi'kmaq word for Two-Eyed Seeing, coined by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall.

*“Etuaptmumk refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing ... and learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all.”*



<http://www.integrativescience.ca/Principles/TwoEyedSeeing/>



Photo Credit: Vivian Searwar, the work of learners in École Christine Morrison Elementary



## Artist Acknowledgement

Once the information was collated, four themes emerged. We named them **commitments**, which are represented in the image created by Ovila Mailhot, Coast Salish graphic artist.

*Ovila Mailhot, Coast Salish graphic artist, originally from Seabird Island reservation in British Columbia, whose roots are both of Stó:lō & Nlaka'pamux Nation created an image to capture these themes. Ovila notes that creating new work and revitalizing the techniques and approaches to Indigenous art is something he feels compelled to do.*

In early 2023, Elders and Members of the Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Education Council suggested a revision of the Equity Scan symbol. You will notice that the graphic now has six paddles instead of three. These paddles represent the five local First Nations upon whose lands MPSD is located, Leq'á:mel, Sema:th, Matheqwi, Sq'éwlets and Qwó:ltl'el First Nations. The final paddle collectively represents additional Indigenous groups served by MPSD, including, but not limited to Lower St'át'imc Nations, Members of the Métis community, Members of the Inuit community, Members of all Indigenous groups whose ancestors originated on traditional Turtle Island territories (lands which are now known as Canada) and who currently reside on Stó:lō lands, and Members of Siwal Si'wes and MPSD. It is a symbol of collaborative spirit of lets'e mot, lets'e thale; sqwá:lewl a good mind, good heart, and good feeling.



## In the Words of the Ovila Mailhot, Coast Salish Artist

*“Art feels vital to me. And being able to share that passion I have, is very special to me. This tradition of work, and this beauty, is so necessary for our culture & for healing.*

*My work must carry some level of simplicity; it must not obscure itself. That’s the tradition I’ve inherited. My work is meant to add to a continuum within a culture so rich and expansive that it still hasn’t been fully actualized or received by mainstream culture.*

*I wanted to put together a minimal style logo that would stand boldly and still be able to tell a story. An image that everyone there could be joyful and proud to have represented.*

*The **eagle** is one of my favourite representations used in our culture & among many Nations. To me the eagle can represent strength, knowledge & wisdom. A symbol that I could see easily tied into learners, teachers & family. That some might see as a role model as well, eagle being the one creature capable of soaring closest to the creator above all.*

*The **sunrise** behind the eagle brings meaning of a new day & new journeys ahead. A combination shared by both learners & teachers. With the educator’s role to show care, a healthy love while nurturing the learners to grow and continue their new beginnings in life.*

*The **paddles raised**. A representation of a diverse group of individuals sharing a common goal on their journey together as educators & learners. Each individual has their own unique qualities, different skill sets to paddle on the same path together. The skill sets, techniques, and knowledge of operating these paddles in life’s journey come from our educators & parents mentoring and knowledge shared.*

*The **canoe** is a representation of our past and something that is still used to this day. Representing how our culture & traditional ways remain intact. The canoe is used on our destination in a collective journey.”*



Photo Credit: Vivian Searwar

-Ovila Mailhot, June 2020



## Examining Current Practices

***How do current MPSD practices, procedures, and policies support, connect to and/or hinder the commitments represented by the eagle, the sunrise, the paddles raised and the canoe?***

### Cultural Safety and Relevance:

Is/does this practice, procedure, or policy...

- culturally safe for Indigenous learners of MPSD and Indigenous communities?
- culturally relevant to Indigenous learners of MPSD and Indigenous communities?
- reflect Indigenous ways of seeing, understanding, and knowing the world?
- consider the effects of racism, oppression, marginalization, poverty, and colonization of Indigenous communities?
- promote meaningful Indigenous participation, contribution, brilliance, and benefit?

### Impacts:

Does this practice, procedure, or policy:

- have any potential negative impacts on Indigenous peoples?
- privilege some individuals or groups at the expense of Indigenous peoples?
- perpetuate systemic disparities faced by Indigenous peoples?
- place barriers in front of Indigenous learners?

If yes,

- What are these impacts?
- How can they be maximized to achieve the most equitable outcomes?
- What are the success indicators associated with this?

If no,

- Are these impacts minor that can be managed? If so, how?
- Are these impacts significant that may require alternatives? If yes, what might be some alternatives to ensure equity for Indigenous learners?



Photo Credit: Vivian Searwar, the work of learners in Cherry Hill Elementary





## Sp'óq'es, The Eagle: Honouring Relationships and Kin Connections

***What does it mean to be in relationship with ourselves, with others and the land?***

*Learning partners of MPSD are committed to:*

- creating and maintaining strong and meaningful relationships and kin connections with:
  - ourselves and our identities, recognizing our implicit biases and privilege
  - with Indigenous learners and their families,
  - local Indigenous Elders, role models and knowledge holders,
  - with Indigenous culture and local Nations,
  - with colleagues and all learning partners of MPSD
  - with Indigenous curriculum and knowledge,
  - and with Indigenous communities and the land
- encouraging Indigenous learners to explore their Indigenous identities, traditional knowledge, and language and to engage in cultural practices and ceremony.
  - taking responsibility both individually and collectively in the creation of a culture of reciprocity to deepen a sense of belonging for Indigenous learners in MPSD schools.



*Photo Credit: Vivian Searwar, Stave Falls Outdoor School*



## **Swep'áth', The Sunrise: Creating and Maintaining Safe Learning Environments**

***How are kin connections nurtured in a school environment? What does a safe school environment look like and feel like?***

*Learning partners of MPSD are committed to:*

- creating welcoming, nurturing, validating and inclusive learning cultures led by adults
  - who show care, concern, and healthy love.
  - who demonstrate an awareness and understanding that Indigenous learners are of diverse family backgrounds, with a range of diverse needs, including food security, clothing, transportation, social-emotional safety, and physical safety.
  - who include social-emotional learning and trauma-informed practices in their daily work and in the language used when speaking of, to and with Indigenous peoples.
- creating culturally responsive learning environments, including learning spaces which reflect and respect Indigenous worldviews and perspectives.
- ensuring that MPSD Staff are reflective of the Indigenous learner population.



*Photo Credit: Vivian Searwar, Sq'éwlets*



## Sq'émél, The Paddles Raised: Supporting Learner Success in Equitable Ways

### *What does equity mean? What does equity look like in MPSD schools?*

*Learning partners of MPSD are committed to:*

- meeting students and families where they need to be met and recognizing each student as a differently abled individual, each with unique combinations of gifts and strengths, barriers, and needs.
- supporting student success in equitable ways includes:
  - an awareness, knowledge and growth understanding of anti-racist education,
  - viewing Indigenous students with high expectations, as self-determining individuals, capable of success,
  - realizing that Indigenous learner success is a shared and unified responsibility,
  - providing learners with essential supports and opportunities of access,
  - including inclusive and flexible learning environments and schedules,
  - careful selection and scheduling of classes and courses,
  - positive, ongoing communication with parents and caregivers,
  - offering invitations to school events,
  - school staff visiting the Indigenous communities of the students and families we serve,
  - access to after-school programming and tutoring,
  - options for extra-curricular activities and
  - honouring cultural expertise
- accessing and analysing data to bring necessary changes to increase the Indigenous learner graduation rates in MPSD and to ensure that Indigenous learners are streamlined into classes that will support their post-secondary goals.



*Photo Credit: Golden Production, CK Hogan*





## Sléxwelh, The Canoe: Honouring the Past, Being in the Present, Strengthening the Future

***How can we use our understanding of the past to support our efforts in the present and to work toward a shared future?***

*Learning partners of MPSD are committed to understanding that:*

- pre-contact Indigenous communities were diverse thriving, healthy systems with robust languages, traditions, practices, laws and ceremonies;
- that during contact, these systems were significantly disrupted by the intentional cultural genocide caused by the Indian Residential School System, the Indian Day School and the 60's Scoop;
- that throughout and after contact, Indigenous peoples persevered.
- that the voices of Indigenous Elders are honoured.

By resilience, and through the resurgence and revitalization of language, ceremonial practices and culture, Indigenous peoples are 'restorying' the past and walking toward a shared future.



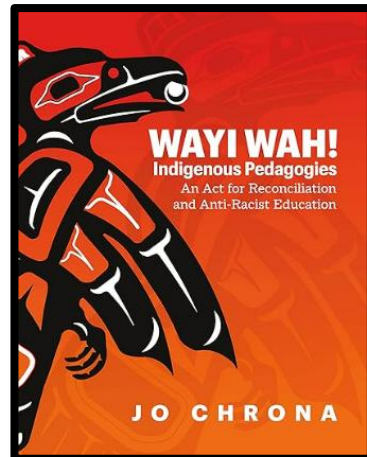
*Photo Credit: Peggy Janicki, War Canoe*



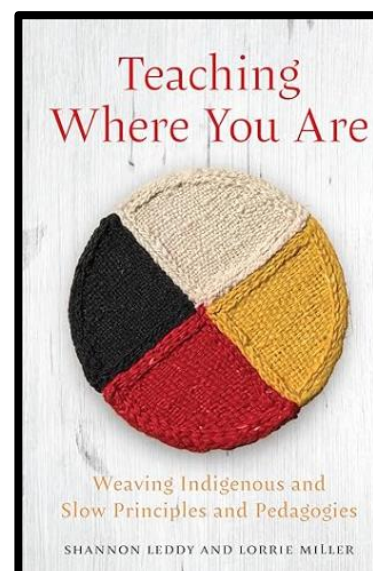
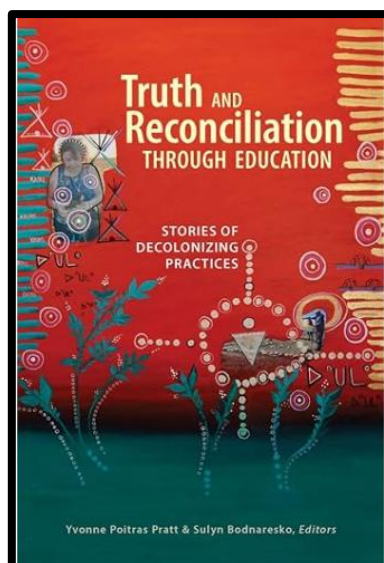
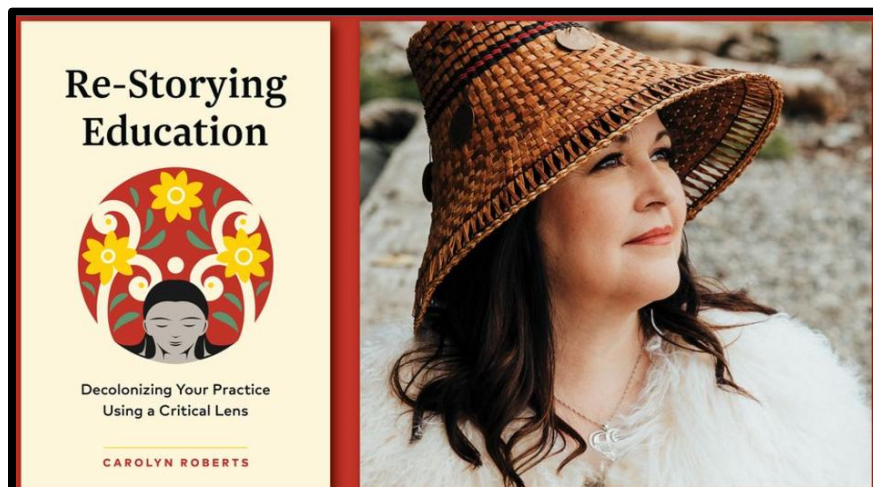
*Photo Credit: Vivian Searwar, Project of Heart Canoe*

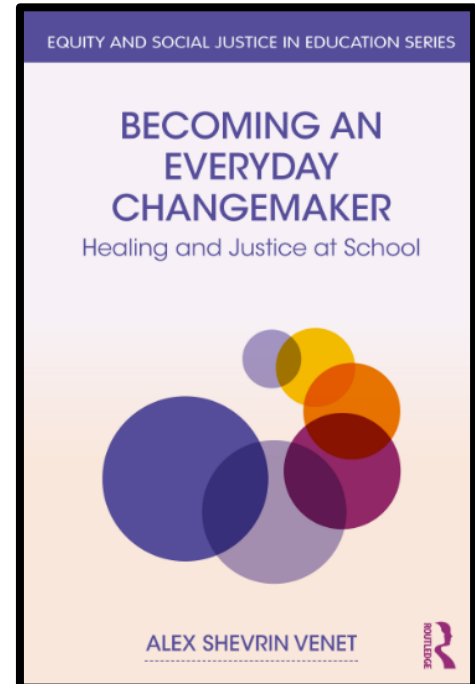


## Essential Equity Reads



**GROUNDING IN THE FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING, WAYI WAH! EXPLORES HOW TO SHAPE ANTI-RACIST AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION SYSTEMS FOR ALL.**





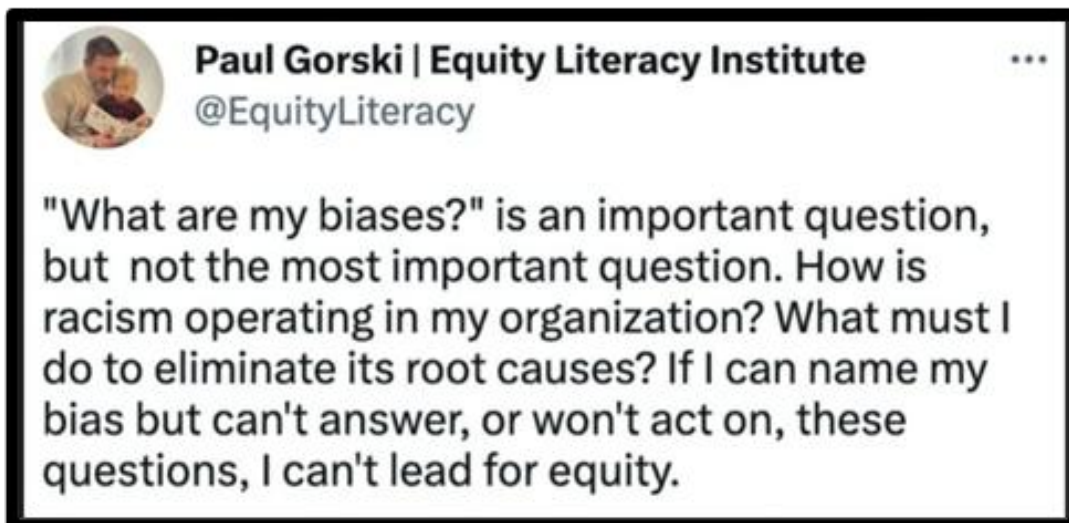
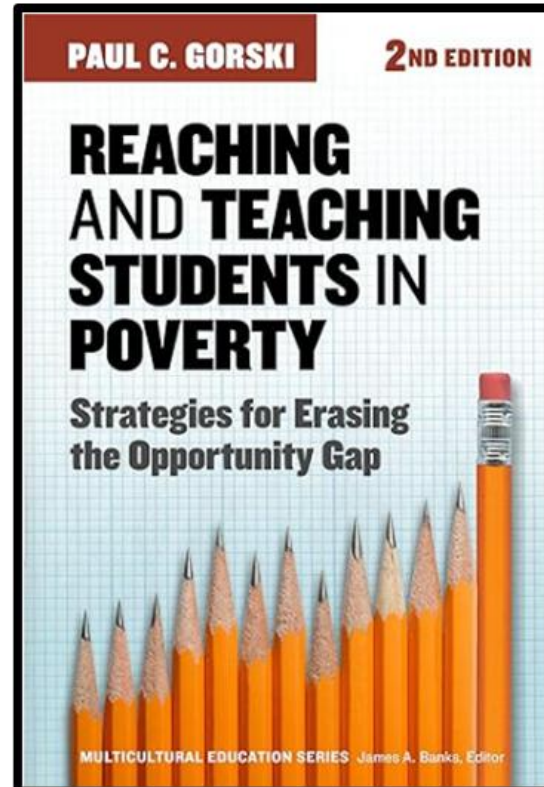
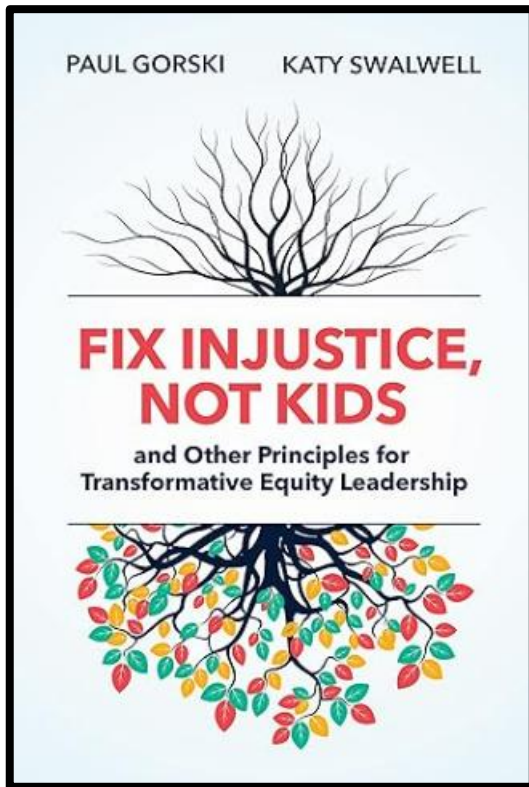
## How is trauma present in our school?

- How does trauma in our society impact our school?
- How does historical and community trauma impact our town? Our neighborhood? Our school?
- How does trauma impact our teachers? Our leaders? Our students?
- How does trauma impact the families and caregivers of our students?
- What are the healing practices of our community?
- What are the coping strategies used by students? By teachers? By families and caregivers? By leaders?
- How is trauma created in our school?
- How is trauma healed in our school?

*Instagram: unconditionallearning*

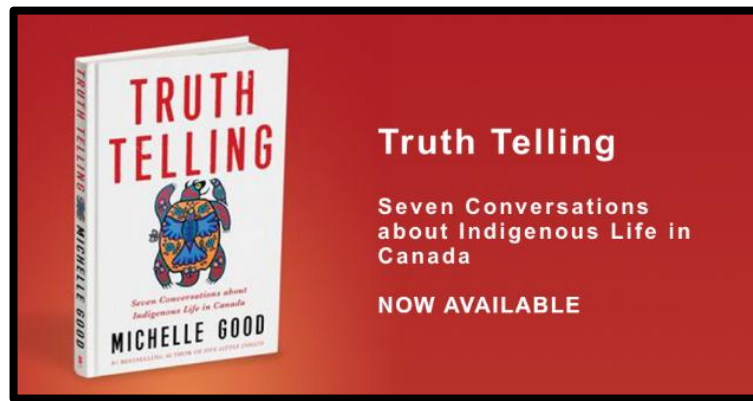






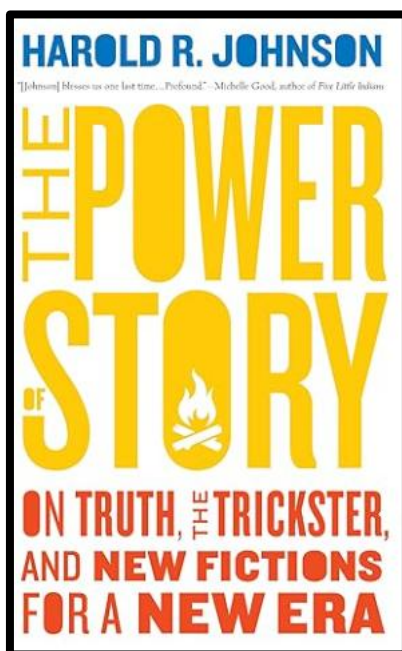
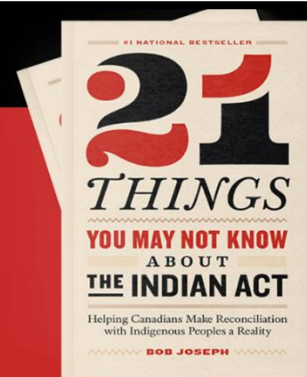
Instagram: paulcgorski





FROM LEADING CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINER **BOB JOSEPH**

The essential guide to understanding the *Indian Act* and its repercussion on generations of Indigenous peoples.



"It is through my lifestory that I am able to experience the tremendous power of story. This is where I can make change, and that change can influence the larger stories...The dominant story is changing, and this is when we can make a difference."

-Harold R. Johnson



## Acknowledgements & Concluding Thoughts

### **Approach to Implementing *Q'pethet Ye Tel:exw: Gathering to Understand: A Framework for Creating a Culture of Equity*:**

**Mission:** *Working as a community*, we will enhance learner empowerment by developing the skills, wellness, confidence, and self-reliance necessary for our children and youth to flourish and prosper throughout their life journey.

The Enhanced Equity Scan requires a high level of respect and trust to function. The inter-relationship and responsibilities reach far beyond the school personnel interacting with learners. Regular communication is essential to building these relationships. It is the policy of Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Education to engage with parents and caregivers, families, and Indigenous communities to ensure that we understand and can support one another in removing barriers and solving problems that may arise. It is important that doors, minds, and hearts remain open and that we express our concerns with a positive intent for resolving any differences. We do this work in keeping with the teachings of Stó:lō Elders, *lets'e mot; lets'e thale; sqwalewel* (one/good heart, mind and feeling).

**Learners** will approach learning with curiosity and creativity. They will apply their individual talents and gifts, always reaching toward their potential. They will take responsibility for their learning, ask questions, and seek help when needed. Supportive and inclusive fellow learners will help everyone to enjoy their school experiences and build life-long friendships.

**Parents and caregivers** have an important role in planning and implementing services at the school level. They provide children and youth with encouragement and needed assistance, including practical supports such as good nutrition, homework assistance, transportation to and from events and clear expectations regarding attendance, performance and "doing your best".

**Family** includes many generations and special relationships with people we care about whether living in the same household or not. The supportive role and modelling of Elders and grandparents, siblings, aunties and uncles, cousins, and all those whom we call 'family' be crucial to the success of learners.



**Indigenous community**, whether on-reserve or “away from home”, provides an important link to the traditions, stories, and practical supports for our learners. Chief and Council, community leaders and staff may be able to aid with transportation, school-related expenses, sports equipment, ceremonies and recognition for learners and their families, making it possible for learners to excel. Regular consultation between community representatives and MPSD staff can help ensure that Indigenous learners are receiving the supplementary services that they require for success.

**Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Education Council** works collaboratively with all schools to ensure that Indigenous learners are successful. Promoting and respecting traditions, they also help foster awareness of and respect for all Indigenous people. The council meets monthly and in special ad hoc work groups to plan and oversee the Enhancement & Equity services provided by the school district. Parents and caregivers of Indigenous learners, Elders and members of Indigenous communities are welcome to come to the table, to provide their ideas and guidance.

**Citizens** in local communities are showing a growing awareness and desire for understanding and interaction with Indigenous cultures and people. A positive environment is emerging, one in which Indigenous traditions are being recognized and respected.

**Community, Social and Government** provide many additional services and programs for Indigenous people that complement the education system. Community resource groups, literacy support, outdoor and environmental activities, sports and recreation providers and the Fraser Valley Regional Library system can enhance the learner's learning and provide additional opportunities for learning.

*We would like to extend a grand kw'as hò:y to the Indigenous learners, parents and caregivers, families and community members who shared their vision for Indigenous Education in MPSD.*

*We are grateful to the Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Advisory Council, to District Staff and to participating individuals from various Indigenous communities and organizations who donated their time to Q'pethet Ye Tel:exw, Gathering to Understand: A Framework for Creating a Culture of Equity.*

## **“Tset xwelchesem late lhewelep”**

**“We raise our hands in thanks and respect.”**





## Agreement Acknowledgement



THIS AGREEMENT OF ENHANCED EQUITY FOR INDIGENOUS LEARNERS IS BETWEEN:

**Mission Public School District**

AND

**Leq'á:mel, Sema:th, Matheqwí, Sq'éwlets, and Qwó:ltl'el First Nations, Lower Stat'limx Nations, the Fraser Valley Métis Nation, the Métis Nation of BC, Members of the Inuit Community, Siwal Si'wes Indigenous Education Council,**

AND

**The Ministry of Education in the Province of British Columbia.**

