
Education for Reconciliation MAY Update

Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools is enacting *Education for Reconciliation* through two committees: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Advisory Committee **and** First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Leadership Committee. **The Leadership Committee** is focused on: developing community and inter-agency partnerships to advocate for Indigenous Education; and sharing with parents what our Board is doing to enact *Education for Reconciliation*. **The Advisory Committee** is focused on: engaging in teacher education about Indigenous Education; and developing and exploring classroom resources in Indigenous Education.

May Update. To further our work in Education for Reconciliation, we are continuing to develop our Indigenous Literature Kit K-12. Yvonne Stang, our Literacy Coordinator, is working with our Elders, Edna and Ella Arcand, and a group of secondary teachers to review the following titles:

[*One Story, One Song* by Richard Wagamese \(Grades 10-12\)](#)

[*Peace Pipe Dreams: The Truth About Lies About Indians* by Darrell Dennis \(Grades 10-12\)](#)

[*They Called Me Number One: Secrets and Survival at an Indian Residential School* by Bev Sellars \(Grades 10-12\)](#)

[*The Thunderbird Poems* by Armand Garnet Ruffo \(Grades 10-12\)](#)

[*The Lynching of Louie Sam* by Elizabeth Stewart \(Grades 7-12\)](#)

[*Red Wolf* by Jennifer Dance \(Grades 7-12\)](#)

[*The Outside Circle: A Graphic Novel* by Patti LaBoucane-Benson \(Grades 10-12\)](#)

[*Three Feathers* by Richard Van Camp \(Grades 7-12\)](#)

[*The Break* by Katherena Vermette](#)

[*Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story* by David Alexander Robertson \(Grades 8-12\)](#)

One of our goals is in keeping with our newly released Teacher Quality Standard, (2018): *A teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit for benefit of all students. Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as: “supporting learning experiences of all students by using resources that accurately reflect and demonstrate the strength and diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit” communities and individuals.*

To this end, our elders encourage us to work with a broad range of individuals within our local and provincial communities to explore potential titles for inclusion in our Indigenous Literature Kit. We share this list of titles and ask you to offer your own suggested titles to consider for review. Please feel free to offer us other titles for review and/or your opinions on the titles that we are reading and considering for junior and/or senior high schools. You may do so by emailing: ystang@gsacrd.ab.ca

Understanding Identities Activity

1. Use a blank piece of 8 ½ X 11 paper and fold it in half. On one side, write “Who Am I? and note the factors that define you (family, social connections, memories, special people, education, work roles, like, dislikes, talents, weaknesses, etc.)
2. Now, imagine yourself ten years ago, and do this same exercise. What factors would have shaped who you were 10 years ago?
3. Debrief: How do our identities change over time? What stays the same?

Identity is what defines our sense of who we are and where we come from. Melanie Lefebvre and Alicia Elliott (2017) wrote an article, “Naming Ourselves” that explains how the tendency in the past (1400s) to use one term such as “Indian” or “Aboriginal” to erase differences between distinct Native communities also erased individuals’ identities within those communities. As a result, they noted that

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naming traditions within Inuit, Métis, Cree, Mohawk communities, as examples, are designed to ensure that individuals within such communities have distinct ties to them, ties that cannot be broken. Hence, naming traditions are often critically important when learning about an Indigenous community, families within an Indigenous community, and individuals within those families. Paying attention to someone's name and how the name came to be is one way to cultivate an understanding and appreciation of the differences amongst Indigenous groups and individuals.



GSACRD Literature Kit

Every school received this book to provide students with an example of how names passed down may not always be understood within families. Sharing how different Indigenous communities understand and approach naming their children is one way to recognize the distinctiveness of such communities.

Inuit Naming Traditions

In addition to exploring our Métis and Cree brothers' and sisters' naming traditions, it is important to consider how Inuit families understand names as part of creating an enlarged sense of Canadian Inuit identity. For the Inuit, naming is an act that symbolizes continuity and a connection to family and tradition. Names are passed down through several generations to commemorate each person who has previously held that name. Based on the concept of *sauniq*, meaning "namesake" or "bone to bone," this system is an important aspect of Inuit culture, reflecting the Inuit spiritual beliefs and emphasizing the interconnectedness among all life forms. Minnie Aodla Freeman shares her personal story of being named in her 1978 book *Life Among the Quallunaat*.

Before I was born, my mother had to decide who would be involved at my birth. . . . The first person who has to be there is a mid-wife, man or woman. In my case it was my grandmother. . . . Also present at my birth was the person I was named after, my other grandmother. This automatically meant that I would never call her 'grandmother' nor would she call me 'grandchild'. Instead, we called each other sauniq, namesake, bone-to-bone relation . . . Our belief is that no one really dies until someone is named after the dead person. So, to leave the dead in peace and to prevent their spirits from being scattered all over the community, we give their names to the newborn. The minds of the people do not rest until the dead have been renamed (Retrieved from <https://www.facinghistory.org/stolen-lives-indigenous-peoples-canada-and-indian-residential-schools/chapter-1/language-names-and-individual-identity> on May 3, 2018).