

**First Nations, Métis
and Inuit Conversations**



Ontario
College of
Teachers
Aboriginal
Teaching and
Teacher
Education

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At the beginning of 2008, the Ontario College of Teachers joined with the Ministry of Education's Aboriginal Education Office to examine Aboriginal teaching and Aboriginal teacher education in Ontario. This partnership was *envisioned in the goals outlined in the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* released in January 2007.

The College believes that support for Aboriginal student success must come from their teachers who require appropriate knowledge and resources to encourage this success. When teachers are better prepared to work with Aboriginal students in the classroom and beyond, the benefits to the students themselves flow forth.

Knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories, and the diversity of these distinct cultures, is necessary to understand the lens through which students and parents view the education system. Knowledge of Aboriginal perspectives and approaches to learning are equally important to help ensure Ontario's teachers are prepared to teach Aboriginal students and in Aboriginal communities. Further, understanding contemporary and traditional First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories and perspectives help teachers increase knowledge among non-Aboriginal students.

These conversations would not have been possible without a great many people. Funding from the Ministry of Education allowed us to engage in these dialogues across the province. Open and constructive planning with our First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners allowed us to host conversations that were respectful, reflective and meaningful. Thank you to all of those individuals who took the time to share their views with us. We offer this report as a record of our conversation and as a basis for going forward to build on what we heard.

Joe Jamieson
Deputy Registrar

Introduction

In the late fall of 2008, the Ontario College of Teachers embarked on a series of conversations with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Over a period of two months, 12 conversations were held across Ontario. The goal of this consultative process was to discuss Aboriginal teaching and teacher education with each of the distinct communities to uncover ways to increase the number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers in Ontario.

The conversations themselves were guided by a holistic framework with four key areas:

1. Aboriginal teacher education standards resources
2. Aboriginal teacher education programs
3. Becoming a certified teacher
4. Being a member of the Ontario College of Teachers.

This report is a compilation of what we heard in these sessions. The recommendations in this report distilled from the options discussed will guide our actions going forward.

Context

The 2006 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples uses the term “Aboriginal people” to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of Canada when referring in a general manner to Inuit, First Nations and Métis people without regard for their separate origins and identities.¹ Section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act*, 1982 recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples – Indians, Métis and Inuit – although accepted practice now replaces the term Indian with First Nations. As described by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, these are three distinct peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.²

This report uses a similar terminology, Aboriginal when referring to the First Nations, Métis and Inuit collectively, but individually noted when the distinct nature and perspectives of their responses warrant.

According to Statistics Canada, the 2006 census reveals that the Aboriginal population in Ontario grew by 68 per cent between 1996 and 2006 with some 242,500 individuals reporting Aboriginal identity. This increase is attributed to high birth rates as well as the enumeration of more reserves since 1996 and more people identifying themselves as Aboriginal. Ontario is home to roughly 158,400 First Nations people, 73,600 Métis and 2,000 Inuit.³ The Aboriginal population accounts for two per cent of the total Ontario population.

¹ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, “Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples,” *Indian and Northern Affairs Canada* October 2006.

² “An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada,” *Indian and Northern Affairs Canada* October 2002.

³ The total Aboriginal identity population includes the Aboriginal groups, multiple Aboriginal responses and Aboriginal responses not included elsewhere.

Ontario is home to the largest population of First Nations people in Canada (23 per cent) and the largest community of Inuit outside of the north (4 per cent). The Métis are the fastest growing Aboriginal group in Canada with roughly 19 per cent of the population living in Ontario.

The Aboriginal population is younger than the non-Aboriginal population. In Ontario, some 43 per cent of the Aboriginal population is school-aged (under 24 years old). This compares with 32 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population. Inuit youth are the youngest with more than 56 per cent of the Ontario population under 24 years old, followed by First Nations youth at 46 per cent and Métis youth at 39 per cent.

The Ontario Ministry of Education estimates some 50,300 Aboriginal students attend provincially funded elementary and secondary schools in Ontario.⁴ This includes some 18,300 First Nations, 26,200 Métis and 600 Inuit students who live in the jurisdictions of school boards, and 5,200 living in First Nations communities but served under a tuition agreement.⁵ Preparing teachers through teacher education programs with appropriate recognition of these distinct histories and cultures is one way to improve student success.

In the spring of 2005, the provincial government released *Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs* outlining a new course for a constructive, co-operative relationship with the Aboriginal peoples of Ontario. One of the key strategies included in this approach was that the Ministry of Education would work with Aboriginal communities and organizations and school boards to develop an education policy framework to improve educational outcomes among Aboriginal children and youth.

The Ministry of Education's Aboriginal Education Office held consultations from May to October 2006 with nearly 500 people from school boards, Aboriginal communities and organizations and other education partners. The result was the *Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* released in January 2007. The framework outlined approaches for schools and school boards to support Aboriginal student achievement and help close the gap in achievement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. The framework also set out strategies to integrate First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories and perspectives throughout the Ontario curriculum as a way to increase knowledge and awareness among all students.

Recognizing a distinct link between the goals of the framework and the objects outlined in the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*, a work group was struck in January 2008 comprised of staff from the College and the Aboriginal Education Office to work collaboratively on these goals and strategies using shared knowledge and common objectives.

⁴ Aboriginal Education Office, "Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework", [Ministry of Education](#), 2007.

⁵ A tuition agreement between a First Nation or the federal government and a school board covers the cost of education provided by the school board. AEO, "Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework" pg 24.

College Mandate

In his final column of *Professionally Speaking*, former Registrar Brian McGowan describes how the College's mandate is not static, but is instead evolutionary and contextual.⁶ He describes six factors that have shaped the context of College and Council decision-making including:

- regulatory responsibilities
- legislated administration
- curriculum and education policy
- professional self-regulation
- social and demographic developments
- labour mobility.

These six shaping factors all influence the Aboriginal teaching environment.

- The College's regulatory responsibilities include the accreditation of Aboriginal teacher education programs as laid out in regulation, for example, programs at Lakehead University and Queen's University, and the certification of these graduates.
- Under the College's Act and regulations, the College has a legislated obligation to develop and implement policies in areas such as language proficiency, distance education and definitions of native ancestry.
- Curriculum and education policy initiatives such as the regulatory revisions to the qualifications and qualification programs for teachers reflect the outcomes of the consultation undertaken through the Teachers' Qualifications Review initiative, which included a formal consultation with Ontario's First Nations communities.
- Professional self-regulation upholds the protection of the public interest for all Ontario residents including more transparent reporting and improved outreach to College stakeholders, including Aboriginal communities.
- Social and demographic developments, such as the increasing Aboriginal population and Aboriginal youth in Ontario's schools, are a driver in the College's strategic direction.
- Lastly, the removal of barriers to labour mobility will impact credential recognition and licensing requirements for all future teachers in Ontario.

The options and recommendations resulting from the conversations with First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups in the late fall of 2008 are in keeping with the evolution of the College's mandate. The links between the recommendations and the College's legislated objects are highlighted in this report.

⁶ Brian McGowan, "Registrar's Report," *Professionally Speaking* March 2009:10-12.

Teachers' Qualifications Review

Motions Approved by Council – September 2006	Status – December 2009
<p>2. That Council approve a regulatory amendment to adjust the definition of programs of professional education so that it includes, as an area of study within the program, Education in Ontario (Ontario context understood to include First Nations, cultural and pluralistic diversity, linguistic and denominational constitutional constituencies and standards of practice and ethical standards).</p>	<p>To be considered in future regulatory amendments related to initial teacher education</p> <p>In future regulatory amendments, references to Inuit and Métis will be added to the definition of programs of professional education.</p>
<p>10. That Council retain current regulatory provisions in the definition of the program of professional education as they apply to both degree and non-degree programs for teachers of general studies, technological studies, Native ancestry and Native language as a second language and the Deaf.</p>	<p>No action necessary – provision is retained</p> <p>The reframed Teachers Qualifications Regulation will adjust “Native Ancestry” to “Aboriginal Ancestry”</p>
<p>12. That Council approve a regulatory amendment to sunset at the appropriate time, the program of professional education for persons of Native ancestry who hold a secondary school diploma but not a degree.</p>	<p>Deferred until sufficient pool of First Nations, Métis and Inuit candidates to make a degree a requirement</p>
<p>13. That Council approve a regulatory amendment to enable programs of professional education that prepares persons who are fluent in an Algonquian or Iroquoian language to be teachers of Native language and leads to certificate of qualification (restricted) to be delivered on a full-time or part-time basis.</p>	<p>To be considered in future regulatory amendments related to initial teacher education</p>
<p>22. That Council retain current regulatory provisions related to requirements for admission into the Teacher of Native language program leading to a certificate of qualification (restricted) as fluency in an Algonquian or Iroquoian language.</p>	<p>No action necessary – current requirement remains</p>
<p>61. That Council approve that Schedule C be comprised of the following courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations, Métis and Inuit: Understanding Traditional Teachings, Histories, Current Issues and Cultures Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Children Teaching Cayuga Teaching Delaware Teaching Ojicree Teaching Oneida 	<p>Completed – regulatory amendments filed and being implemented. Additional changes to be considered in future regulatory amendments.</p>

⁷ Only First Nations groups were represented during the TQR consultation process.

Background

The College's first significant consultation with Aboriginal communities took place in 2001. Since that time, consultation with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities has been a part of major College initiatives.

2001 – Standards Review

In 2001, and again in 2005, First Nations communities were involved in the development and revision of the Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession. In 2005, First Nations educators facilitated focus groups regarding the revised standards in various First Nations communities.

2005 – Teachers' Qualifications Review

In the fall of 2005, a consultation process was undertaken as part of the Teachers' Qualifications Review initiative focused on initial and continuing programs of teacher education specific to Aboriginal teacher education. Roundtable sessions with the First Nations education stakeholders were held in seven communities from September 2005 through to June 2006. Representatives from 34 First Nations organizations participated in these consultations.⁸

To date, 34 of the 56 Council recommendations related to teachers' qualifications have been implemented via regulatory amendment. By the spring of 2010 the College expects to conclude all regulatory recommendations with the exception of those specific to initial teacher education programs.

The feedback received from First Nations participants during the consultation process was reflected in five of the policy options recommended and approved by the College's third Council at their September 2006 meeting. These recommendations and their current status can be found on the previous page.

This was an opportunity for the College to engage in a focused dialogue with First Nations communities in Ontario. The feedback received following the consultation process shows that these were successful as steps in positive and constructive relationship-building. The Aboriginal conversations held in the late fall of 2008 continued this relationship-building.

2008 – Aboriginal Conversations

During November and December 2008, 12 conversations were held with First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups across Ontario. Sessions were held with First Nations groups in Kenora, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Manitoulin Island, Ottawa, London, and Toronto. Sessions were held with Métis groups in Thunder Bay, Timmins, Ottawa and Midland. The College's first Inuit dialogue was held in Ottawa.

⁸ "Preparing Teachers for Tomorrow" Ontario College of Teachers: 115



The College worked closely with its partners – the Chiefs of Ontario First Nations Education Coordination Unit, the Métis Nation of Ontario, Tungasuvvingat Inuit and First Nations educators from across the province – on the proposed format and process for each conversation. Sessions began with a traditional cultural opening offered by a First Nations elder or Métis senator, or by the lighting of an oil lamp – a quillq – by an Inuit elder. Each session was also closed by a local elder or senator. Other cultural symbols such as drums, eagle feathers and a Métis sash were welcomed and the College’s talking stick, a gift from the BC College of Teachers, was offered for use during the conversations.

First Nations and Métis participants were seated in a talking circle while the quillq served as a catalyst for the conversations with Inuit participants which occurred informally around a table. These circular formations not only encouraged open discussion, but also reflected the holistic framework guiding the conversations themselves. Graphically depicted as a talking circle or medicine wheel, participants were encouraged to focus discussion in four key areas during each session. The open and holistic discussion during the conversations typically touched on all four areas.

Following each conversation, participants were offered the opportunity to review the information collected to ensure it accurately reflected the content of their session and provide any supplementary feedback.

Guiding Principles

In reflecting the feedback and input of participants in these Aboriginal conversations, the following principles have guided the conversation process and development of this report:

- respect the individual identities of First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups
- balance the differing views within each group
- benefit First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers and students
- focus on tangible, actionable recommendations.

What We Heard & What We Can Do

The conversations with First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups were based on a framework with four main focus areas. The feedback collected from these conversations is grouped according to these four focus areas. As mentioned, the framework itself was visually presented as a talking circle or medicine wheel to depict the flow of ideas from one area to another and their overall connectivity.

It was noted during a conversation that the College's recognition of the holistic way of knowing and learning inherent to First Nations, Métis and Inuit traditions served to set the stage for a strong and genuine partnership with Aboriginal groups. Participants agreed that the consulting process undertaken by the College to promote a respectful and inclusive atmosphere for the conversations was a good model for future initiatives with Aboriginal partners and stakeholders.

Options:

- a) create a representative advisory group to continue to discuss and validate the College's Aboriginal-related strategies and initiatives with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

Focus Area 1:

Aboriginal Teacher Education Standards Resources

- What resources might support ethical standards and standards of practice in Aboriginal teacher education?

First Nations participants in the conversations emphasized the need for supports and resources for teachers learning how to teach Aboriginal culture, traditions, knowledge and identities. Teachers do not just teach Aboriginal content and need to be prepared to teach culturally-sensitive subjects. Participants felt the College could play an important advocacy role with practising teachers to encourage learning more about Aboriginal culture and perspectives, and about instructional methods that are responsive to the Aboriginal community.

Some First Nations participants suggested that the College's professional and ethical standards could be translated into syllabics⁹ as a way to invite greater understanding from multiple perspectives. Participants noted that, as written, the standards are too abstract.

Most conversations noted differing ways to enhance the standards resources with cultural symbols. Inuit participants offered that standards resources could be enhanced by incorporating an inukshuk to reflect Inuit perspectives. As a guiding symbol, the inukshuk was perceived to be an appropriate symbol because each of the stones is a foundation, just as the standards construct the foundation of professional practice. Métis participants noted that adding the traditional Métis sash to the standards documents would be a way to represent and acknowledge Métis culture and heritage.

The conversations about standards resources raised the possibility of using digital stories to share the professional and ethical standards. In keeping with the oral traditions of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit, recorded digital stories shared by elders and Aboriginal teachers offer an opportunity to enhance the applicability of the College's standards to teachers in these communities.

Most participants agreed that additional work can be done in promoting the standards and addressing the general lack of knowledge about the standards among Aboriginal teachers.

Options:

- a) develop digital stories to enhance the applicability of the standards to current and future First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers
- b) investigate the translation of the College's professional and ethical standards into languages other than English and French
- c) adapt the current standards resources for Aboriginal audiences, for example, by incorporating visuals and symbols such as an inukshuk, a Métis sash, an eagle feather
- d) continue to add education-related resources on First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories and cultures to the Margaret Wilson Library
- e) liaise with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to deliver presentations on the professional and ethical standards of practice.

Focus Area 2:

Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs

- What other ways might Aboriginal teacher education programs be delivered?

A background document was provided to conversation participants outlining the Aboriginal teacher education programs in Ontario. The feedback collected in this area is organized according to initial teacher education programs and additional qualifications.

⁹ Syllabics is a writing system that uses symbols to represent syllables of the spoken language.

Initial Teacher Education Programs

Participants in both the Métis and First Nations conversations identified concerns about the real and perceived stigmatization felt by teachers who completed Aboriginal teacher education programs. Some reported feeling ostracized in school staffrooms, being considered less than or unequal to non-Aboriginal teachers as well as hearing comments about their so-called “quaint cultural practices”.

First Nations participants noted that this perception remains despite the fact that Aboriginal teacher education programs are accredited by the College. Examples offered as reinforcement of this inequality included the lower remuneration of First Nations teachers, being assigned to portables and so isolated from other teaching colleagues and having access to fewer resources to teach specific language skills to many grade levels.

First Nations participants felt that considerable public relations work could be done regarding Aboriginal teacher education programs and promoting the knowledge and skills of graduates coming out of these programs. They acknowledged however, that the quality of these alternative pathways to teaching was equal to, if not more important than, the pathways themselves.

Participants in several First Nations conversations questioned whether there was a way to build on the existing diploma programs so that a language teacher might move into a degree program to become a general studies teacher and focus on a specific subject area.

First Nations participants felt the Native language three-part diploma program did not sufficiently prepare or assess the communication skills and required competencies of teachers. Language teachers need to be as skilled in reading and writing as in speaking. This is a significant challenge because of the oral tradition of First Nations languages. It was suggested the diploma program needs to be reviewed to include a greater focus on “being a teacher,” for example, lesson planning and classroom management.

Métis participants stressed the importance of recognizing the skill level among those Métis without university degrees. Métis participants noted that education assistants are a natural feeder group for potential teachers and questioned whether the education assistant program could be considered towards the completion of a teacher education program.

Several First Nations participants noted that when teachers changed from being employed in a federal school to being employed by a provincial school board, their band teaching experience was often not recognized. Many participants questioned whether knowledge, life experiences and the prior learning of First Nations individuals, particularly elders, could be recognized for certification purposes. Classrooms with elders as teachers were reported to have fewer discipline problems and learners who were more engaged.

The importance of non-Aboriginal teachers understanding Aboriginal perspectives was emphasized in many conversations. Misunderstandings about the diverse knowledge and ways of life of First Nations, Métis and Inuit can lead to conflict. Some participants

in the First Nations conversations felt ignoring issues of racism and colonialism during such discussions was dangerous. Familiarity with the negative parts of Aboriginal history is required to understand today's Aboriginal context.

Métis participants proposed that education programs require a stronger focus on ensuring an accurate history of the Métis as a people and as a nation. Participants suggested all teacher education programs should contain a week of Métis history and culture and should capitalize on the role of elders as a learning resource for students and student-teachers alike. First Nations participants noted, however, that even a week of instruction would be insufficient to adequately teach the diversity of Aboriginal history and culture.

Participants indicated that teachers need a thorough orientation and high level of professional knowledge with respect to Aboriginal students and communities, much of which is gained through experiential learning. Participants confirmed that Aboriginal cultures are very complex and teachers need to be skilled and knowledgeable in order to guide students through the curriculum. This is particularly applicable to the history of residential schools and the loss of identity that resulted for all Aboriginals. Lessons in this area need to be taught in a highly informed and sensitive manner.

The importance of the practicum placement occurring in Aboriginal settings was stressed in most conversations. Participants in the Métis groups noted that Métis teacher preparation is distinct from First Nations teacher preparation and emphasized important considerations for teaching Métis children, for example, relationship building and employing flexible teaching styles. First Nations participants agreed that cultural understanding could be enhanced if non-Aboriginal teachers completed their practicum in First Nations communities with a focus on experiencing holistic learning.

Métis and First Nations participants suggested that an apprenticeship model for teaching would be valuable. This focus on developing skills and working closely with another teacher was felt to be particularly helpful to new teachers in northern communities.

Additional Qualifications

Several Métis participants noted that the use of the term “Native” in describing additional qualification courses such as “Native Studies” and “Native Languages” appeared to only reflect the First Nations perspective. As distinct cultures, the Métis and Inuit perspectives need to be included for an all-encompassing native education.

First Nations participants echoed this view of reflecting distinct cultures by further suggesting course names be changed from, for example, “Teaching Aboriginal Children” to “Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Children”. One individual offered the example of Canada's place within North America as an analogy for this request for distinct recognition – Canada as a nation unto itself based on a unique history and identity, but also part of a larger North American grouping.

First Nations participants noted that an additional qualification course to educate teachers on how to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their lessons would be beneficial. Some participants offered that Aboriginal language courses should be treated the same as French as a Second Language courses.

First Nations participants observed that native language programs and courses were not necessarily addressing the needs of First Nations communities. The multiple dialects that exist within First Nations languages pose a challenge for such programs because they may be designed for one particular dialect. This was noted as having significant implications for community events and cultural traditions in a localized context.

Métis participants were divided on the development of an additional qualification course for the Michif language. There is ongoing discussion within the Métis Nation of Ontario on a standard Michif language in Ontario. There are however, common foundational elements from which a beginning course could be developed.

A discussion regarding the development of an additional qualification course focused on Métis culture and history unfolded in a similar fashion. Participants were supportive of such a course being developed but cautioned against assuming all Métis communities share similar perspectives about Métis knowledge, culture and traditions.

Inuit participants confirmed that an additional qualification course on teaching Inuktitut would address increasing demand for learning opportunities in this area. It was noted, however, that while most Inuit would recognize written Inuktitut, there are many different spoken dialects. A common language is still emerging which would make the development of an additional qualification course in this area challenging at this point.

Inuit have a strong community focus and tend to focus their social and learning activities around central hubs. An investigation into the use of these hubs, for example, the Tungasuvvingat Centre in Ottawa, as providers of additional qualifications, or offering preparatory support for courses at Algonquin College in Ottawa could offer new, alternate course providers.

Overall, the College's accreditation process for both initial and continuing teacher education programs was viewed as being very challenging. Some suggestions were made that the process needs to be reviewed and understood from an Aboriginal perspective. It was suggested the College needs to be open to the possibility that an Aboriginal focused program may require different approaches in the course content, guidelines and implementation.

Options:

- a) develop First Nations, Métis and Inuit educative resources based on the ethical standards and standards of practice that will support and enhance initial and continuing teacher education programs and courses

- b) ensure the Education in Ontario diversity component¹⁰ for future initial teacher education programs is developed with input from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and reflects the histories and cultures of each group
- c) revise additional qualification course guideline names including the term Native or Aboriginal to include distinct and appropriate recognition of First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories and cultures
- d) develop additional qualification course guidelines that reflect in-depth learning of First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories and culture
- e) explore the development of new additional qualification courses in Métis (Teaching Michif) and Inuit (Teaching Inuktitut) languages, as well as additional First Nations languages
- f) explore alternative models for Aboriginal teacher education programs and alternative providers of additional qualification courses
- g) integrate First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives, traditions and cultures into additional qualification courses
- h) review the accreditation practices and processes to include Aboriginal perspectives and approaches to support teacher education
- i) review the accreditation processes to identify any possible barriers for supporting Aboriginal teacher education.

Focus Area 3:

Becoming a Certified Teacher

- How might we encourage individuals to become certified teachers?

In general, all Aboriginal participants agreed that it is important to have certified First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers in Ontario schools, especially as the Aboriginal population continues to grow at a rapid pace. First Nations participants emphasized the importance of having certified teachers in federal schools (that is, on reserve) to ensure the same standard as in district school boards, for example, teachers upholding the same ethical standards, and professional knowledge based on the same teacher education programs.

While the promotion of teaching as a profession was deemed a good concept, some First Nations participants felt there was little value in advocating teaching amongst First Nations communities. They believe that each individual is born with particular gifts and strengths that are to be nurtured for the good of the community. Those individuals with a gift for teaching will naturally pursue that occupation whereas promoting teaching to others with different gifts will often have little impact.

Other First Nations participants stressed that in order to inspire individuals to become teachers, it is necessary to have a curriculum that reflects First Nations knowledge, language, tradition and culture.

¹⁰ The inclusion of an Education in Ontario diversity component to programs of teacher education is a Council approved recommendation from the Teachers' Qualification Review initiative.

First Nations participants offered that there was little perceived value in being certified by the Ontario College of Teachers. They questioned the quality of teachers coming out of the Teacher of a Native language education program. They felt the College's issuance of a certificate of qualification (restricted) did not provide a guarantee of the quality of the teachers' instructional ability, nor their ability to speak the language. While the teacher may be College-certified, his or her inability to speak the language of the local community diminishes their value in the eyes of the community.

Métis participants shared that one of the largest hurdles to becoming a teacher is financial – the challenge of continuing education as well as the ability to make a living. The current over-supply of teachers coupled with a decreasing demand due to declining enrolment was deemed a deterrent to many Métis students who otherwise wanted to become teachers. This demand and supply reality was noted as a challenge to encouraging people to become teachers. Some First Nations participants went further to suggest it would be irresponsible of the College to continue to certify teachers, and irresponsible for communities to continue to encourage teaching as a career, when there are no jobs for new teachers.

Métis participants identified several strategies for promoting teaching as a profession among Métis communities, for example:

- begin promotion of teaching at the elementary level,
- regular advertising in the *Métis Voyageur* newsletter and on the Métis Nation of Ontario web site
- develop a promotional kit including a DVD featuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit students
- produce a pamphlet or brochure aimed at the Métis community communicating the various ways to become a teacher
- use existing centres such as Métis student centres at various colleges as a means of distributing these brochures
- work with guidance counsellors as a means of sharing information about becoming a teacher and how to achieve such a goal
- establish a bursary to serve as an incentive to pursue teaching as a career
- sponsor a one-week teacher camp/shadowing initiative designed to convey a week in the life of a teacher
- other promotional ideas were a billboard and television commercial identifying relevant teacher education courses and contact information.

Participants stressed that any promotional material should include the word Métis so Métis can see themselves reflected and included. Participants noted that promotional material developed by the Métis Nation of Ontario for the Métis Families Learning Together Program might serve as a model for the College.

First Nations participants identified *Professionally Speaking* as a potential vehicle for inspiring others to consider teaching as a career. The magazine could feature coverage of First Nations teachers who left their community to become a teacher and then returned. Another article could identify ways that teaching credentials could lead to

other positions within the education system or even in other careers. It was suggested that a broader picture of who teachers are and what roles they occupy in the education system might encourage individuals to think about teaching differently.

First Nations participants suggested the College attend the annual career day in Six Nations, Walpole Island and/or the annual series of college and university forums. Some pointed out the materials used to promote journalism as a career choice for First Nations students could be a useful model for the College.

First Nations participants noted that making teacher education programs more accessible, perhaps through greater use of distance education, could assist individuals interested in becoming a teacher but are reluctant to leave their communities and families. A direct incentive approach, perhaps via a partnership with a community to sponsor a First Nations student, was also noted as a way to encourage individuals to become teachers.

Inuit participants expressed a strong desire for Inuit teachers; a desire that is tempered with a recognition of challenges in funding but also in instilling and nurturing a desire to teach in others. A suggestion was offered to illustrate the various pathways available to individuals interested in a teaching career with Inuit specific images, for example, a dog sled navigating from one point to another.

Inuit participants confirmed the importance of Inuit students seeing Inuit teachers. Such teachers not only serve as role models for students, but effectively promote teaching as a career. Participants identified the use of existing support networks, either in schools, colleges or city centres, as a means to increase awareness of careers in teaching and the benefits to a community gained through one individual's achievements.

Options:

- a) develop career path material specific to First Nations, Métis and Inuit on teaching as a profession
- b) partner with First Nations, Métis and Inuit community centres or networks to disseminate information on the teaching profession and ways to become a teacher as well as services provided by the College
- c) work with First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups to write articles for and communicate information in *Professionally Speaking* and other publications on the teaching profession and the College.

Focus Area 4:

Being a Member of the Ontario College of Teachers

- How might we help identify Aboriginal teachers in the province?

First Nations participants confirmed that many band councils and education authorities expect their teachers to be College-certified based on the assumption that their recognized qualifications mean they have achieved higher standards. More and more federally-funded schools are requiring their teachers to obtain College certification.

Participants noted that while First Nations teachers working in on-reserve schools may initially maintain their membership with the College, there are no salary benefits to certification and no salary adjustments upon completing additional qualification courses because they are on a different salary grid than their provincial colleagues. They begin to perceive little value in retaining their membership and typically allow their membership to lapse.

First Nations participants also noted that the value of being a member of the College diminishes considerably for teachers who do not get teaching positions after they complete what is seen as a lengthy and costly certification process. The cost of membership for these individuals often outweighs the value.

Other First Nations participants felt that membership in the College indicates an individual is not committed to the community. Frequently, teachers use teaching in a First Nations community as a stepping stone to teaching elsewhere; a move facilitated by maintaining College membership. Communities make an investment in integrating and supporting their teachers and the gap left in a community when a teacher leaves is significant. It is also detrimental to the development of a sustainable teaching population in a community.

Lastly, some First Nations participants questioned the investigations and hearings process used for teachers in the federal system. While on-reserve teachers feel they are held to the same professional and ethical standards of practice, the process for hearing complaints is different when they are not members of the College.

Self-Identification

The College used these conversations to initiate a discussion with the Aboriginal community about a voluntary self-identification process for First Nations, Métis and Inuit members of the College. As part of the fourth focus area, participants provided advice and input on potential benefits and areas of caution if such a process was introduced as well as considerations for implementation.

First Nations and Métis participants stressed the importance of being very clear on the rationale and purpose behind the development of a policy on self-identification including how such a policy would help the education system and impact the individual. Teachers need to understand not only what the self-identification information would be used for, but what potential abuses exist and how they will be mitigated. Participants felt teachers would need assurances that no stigma would be attached to those who self-identify.

First Nations participants cautioned that self-identification is a process of reconnecting to ancestry, traditions and heritage. Some felt that respondents would choose not to identify based on pride and being secure in their own identity. Others may choose not to identify based on mistrust and fear that results would potentially be used to control respondents or impact current funding agreements. Some argued a self-identification policy needs to be premised on social justice and reflect equity and balance.

It was noted during the conversations that many Métis declined to self-identify on the latest Statistics Canada Census so the College would not likely have a greater rate of success. Irrespective of the significant increase in the Métis population reported in the 2006 Census, participants explained that discrimination has a prominent place in Métis history and it has long been taboo to claim Métis identity. Some participants felt that self-identification comes from within an individual and occurs when that individual is ready. Imposing a requirement to identify one way or another was viewed as an abuse of power by school boards or the College.

Other participants did note however, that having a box to check off indicating Métis identity also served as an institutional or systemic recognition of the Métis people as distinct from other Aboriginal groups. Participants spoke about the increased desire among youth to proclaim their Métis identity and the self-identification of teachers as role models could encourage the continued pursuit of cultural knowledge.

Other Métis participants noted that in this increasingly data-driven world, a reliable database of Métis teachers could be beneficial to the Métis community. It was also pointed out that self-identification is already required to access funding, resources and other individual and community supports.

First Nations participants agreed that the collection of such data could help project the progress of First Nations people by developing a baseline gauge of the First Nations teaching population. A self-identification policy might enable the larger Aboriginal community to create something similar to a professional learning community or communities of interest to focus on education issues such as curriculum, resources, access to professional development and resources, etc.

Participants recognized *Professionally Speaking* as a useful resource for the implementation of a self-identification policy. Aboriginal teachers may be more likely to self-identify if they saw themselves and their concerns and issues discussed in the magazine.

A self-identification policy could bring out the grief and fear that many Aboriginal people have attached to the education system. The impact of residential schools remains with many; those who attended and those who hid their identities to avoid attending. Parents often transfer these views to their children. It was noted that having statistics available on Aboriginal students and teachers more often than not also leads to unfavourable comparisons about success rates and achievements. Participants stressed that communication and relationship building has to happen first.

Other cautions related to the implementation of a self-identification policy included:

- a lingering belief that names of activist Aboriginal people are placed on a list to be monitored by police and government
- using the information to explicitly define what is Métis because various regions have differing definitions
- recognition that an individual may not be able to prove their Métis identity due to lack of genealogy records
- any release of data collected should be preceded by an extensive consultation with Aboriginal groups.

First Nations participants reiterated that should the College go ahead with a self-identification policy, it must be optional. They suggested that a demographic profile of the entire teaching population should be developed through self-identification so as not to single out Aboriginal teachers. Participants confirmed that such a profile could take many years to be completed and the College should not expect respondents to embrace a self-identification policy quickly. There should be both a short and long-term implementation plan.

First Nations participants noted that much work in the area of self-identification has already been completed in many district school boards. They invited the College to research the methods used and to draw on the expertise, knowledge and experience of individuals within these communities.

Métis participants asked to be involved in the development and communication of the self-identification policy. First Nations participants suggested that an advisory group should be created to oversee every step of the process. Inuit participants agreed that policies and programs focused on Aboriginal issues should draw upon input from Inuit elders sharing Inuit culture and knowledge. It was noted that the longer the College works with Aboriginal groups to build a strong and cooperative relationship, the easier the implementation of initiatives such as this would be.

This input on the possible implementation of a voluntary self-identification policy was sought through the conversation process to assess whether the College could better allocate appropriate resources to Aboriginal teacher education using a confirmed database of members. The College continues to reflect on the constructive comments heard at the conversations around this sensitive area.

Recommendations

Participants in the First Nations, Métis and Inuit conversations offered many ideas, suggestions and feedback on the College's and other education stakeholders' initiatives. While this raw data has been preserved, this report is focused on the many possible options for consideration in each of the College's focus areas.

Initial discussions around these options has occurred with the College work group and with the External Advisory Group composed of First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholders. Such discussions have focused on what the College can do within the parameters of its mandate yet still honour the feedback received through the conversation process. Pursuit of this balance has resulted in the following recommendations.

It is important to note that some of the recommendations relate to College policy while others relate to administrative practices. The key difference to this delineation is the approval process required to implement the recommendation. All recommendations link to the mandated objects outlined in the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*.

(A) College policy:

The following recommendations may impact overall College policy and in some cases, College legislation. In keeping with the policy development process, the Registrar will bring forward to Council options for regulatory development or changes to existing policy stemming from their implementation.

Object 2: To develop, establish and maintain qualifications for membership in the College.

1. Ensure the Education in Ontario diversity component¹⁰ for future initial teacher education programs is developed with input from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, and reflects the histories and cultures of each group.

Object 6: To provide for the ongoing education of members of the College.

2. Revise additional qualification course guideline names including the term Native or Aboriginal to include distinct and appropriate recognition of First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories, cultures and traditions.
3. Explore the development of additional qualification course guidelines that reflect an in-depth learning of First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories and cultures, as well as new additional qualification courses in Métis, Inuit and additional First Nations languages.

¹⁰ The inclusion of an Education in Ontario diversity component to programs of teacher education is a Council approved recommendation from the Teachers' Qualification Review initiative.

(B) Administrative Practices:

The following recommendations may impact the administrative practices of the College through adjustments to process or the introduction of new practices. The development of action items related to their implementation will be communicated regularly through the Registrar's Report as presented at each Council. Where the exploration of an item leads to desired changes to policy and/or regulation, options will be brought forward to Council at an appropriate date.

Object 1: To regulate the profession of teaching and to govern its members.

4. Create a representative advisory group to continue to discuss and validate the College's Aboriginal-related strategies and initiatives with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

Object 7: To establish and enforce professional standards and ethical standards applicable to members of the College.

5. Investigate the development of new First Nations, Métis and Inuit educative resources, for example, digital stories, or the adaptation of current educative resources for Aboriginal audiences, for example, incorporating specific visuals, symbols or language references. Any new resources will be based on the ethical standards and standards of practice that support and enhance initial and continuing teacher education programs and courses.

Object 3: To accredit professional teacher education programs offered by post-secondary educational institutions and other bodies.

Object 4: To accredit ongoing education programs for teachers offered by post-secondary educational institutions and other bodies.

6. Review the accreditation practices and processes to include Aboriginal perspectives and approaches, and consider with College stakeholders mechanisms for supporting Aboriginal teacher education.

Object 10: To communicate with the public on behalf of members of the College.

7. Work with First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups to develop career path material specific to these communities, write articles for and communicate information in *Professionally Speaking* and other publications on the teaching profession and the College, and partner with First Nations, Métis and Inuit community centres or networks to disseminate information on the teaching profession, ways to become a teacher and services provided by the College.

The College believes that support for Aboriginal student success must come from their teachers who require appropriate knowledge and resources to encourage this success. When teachers are better prepared to work with Aboriginal students in the classroom and beyond, the benefits to the students themselves flow forth.



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