

Board Development Topic: Treaty Education

Date of Board Meeting:

August 17, 2023

Strategic Priority:

- High Quality Teaching and Learning
- Engagement of All Students, Families, and Communities
- Effective Policy and Procedures
- Healthy, Sustainable Physical & Social Environments

Quality Indicator(s):

QI 6.2 – The Director keeps the Board informed about Division operations.

QI 6.3 – The Director provides the Board with balance, sufficient, concise information and clear recommendations for actions items in agendas.

QI 6.6 – The Director ensures high quality management services are provided to the Board.

Information for the Board (10 fast facts):

1. Acknowledgment of Territory: By learning about Treaty Education, students in the Good Spirit School Division understand and recognize that they are living and learning on Treaty 4 Territory. This acknowledgement fosters a sense of respect towards the history and culture of the Indigenous peoples who have lived on these lands for generations.
2. Historical Perspective: Treaty Education provides a valuable historical context to students about the development of Canada as a nation. This includes understanding the treaties signed between the First Nations and the Crown, such as Treaty 4, which have significantly influenced the country's historical and political landscape.
3. Promotes Understanding and Reconciliation: Treaty Education forms a crucial aspect of the reconciliation process with Indigenous peoples. It equips students with knowledge about past injustices, facilitating a culture of understanding, respect, and healing, in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.
4. Enhances Cultural Diversity: Understanding the principles of Treaty Education encourages cultural diversity and inclusion. Students learn to appreciate the richness of Indigenous culture, heritage, and traditions, fostering a more inclusive and respectful learning environment.
5. Supports Curriculum Goals: The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education identifies Treaty Education as an integral part of the K-12 curriculum. Knowledge about treaties supports the overall learning objectives, contributing to the holistic development of students.
6. Respect for Indigenous Rights: Understanding treaties helps students to comprehend the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada, including rights to land, self-governance, and cultural practices. This understanding can foster civic responsibility and active citizenship.
7. Real-World Connections: Treaty Education is not just about past events - it is about how these treaties impact present-day realities. Students will learn how treaties continue to affect various aspects of society, including law, politics, and social justice.

8. **Developing Critical Thinking:** Treaty Education challenges students to think critically about historical narratives and perspectives. This promotes independent thinking, analysis, and a deeper understanding of how history influences the present and future.
9. **Enhances Mutual Respect:** Learning about the treaties and their importance can foster mutual respect and empathy among students of different backgrounds. This can play a vital role in promoting harmony in multicultural societies.
10. **Encourages Responsible Citizenship:** As future citizens, students need to be aware of the commitments made by their ancestors. Understanding the obligations and responsibilities outlined in treaties like Treaty 4 can guide them towards being more responsible and informed citizens.

Frequently Asked Questions to the Board & Possible Responses

Question:

Why do school libraries and public libraries have diverse text that may include various cultural perspectives, viewpoints, LGBTQ2+ materials, etc.?

Answer:

Libraries, whether they are in schools or public settings, serve a diverse group of individuals and their purpose extends beyond just providing books and information. They are community hubs that cater to all individuals in a society, regardless of their cultural background, viewpoint, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other personal characteristics. Here are a few reasons why libraries include diverse texts:

- **Reflecting Society:** Libraries strive to accurately reflect the society they serve, which is naturally diverse. Having materials that represent different cultural perspectives and experiences ensures that all members of the community can see themselves and their experiences reflected in the library's collection.
- **Promoting Understanding and Empathy:** Libraries have a role in promoting understanding among different societal groups. By offering materials that explore different perspectives, libraries can help patrons understand and empathize with experiences and viewpoints that differ from their own.
- **Encouraging Critical Thinking:** Exposure to diverse perspectives encourages critical thinking. It forces individuals to question their assumptions, understand different viewpoints, and think critically about different societal issues.
- **Supporting Education:** For school libraries in particular, the inclusion of diverse materials aligns with educational goals, supporting curricula that focus on teaching students about different cultures, histories, lifestyles, and viewpoints.
- **Championing Equality and Inclusivity:** Including diverse materials is also a way for libraries to champion the principles of equality and inclusivity. By having materials that represent all groups, including marginalized ones such as LGBTQ2+ community, libraries demonstrate their commitment to providing resources for all patrons, not just a select few.

- **Facilitating Conversations:** Libraries are also safe spaces for dialogue. By including diverse materials, they facilitate conversations about various societal issues, promoting understanding and tolerance.
- **Promoting Accessibility:** Libraries aim to make information accessible to everyone. This means providing resources in different languages, formats, and on different subjects to meet the needs of all users.

In this way, libraries can fulfill their mission of providing a democratic access to information, encouraging lifelong learning, and fostering a love of reading and discovery.

Question:

Why are schools experiencing increases to class sizes in Saskatchewan? What might school divisions do about it?

Answer:

Saskatchewan is experiencing fluctuations in our student population after the COVID-19 pandemic. Urban centers like Yorkton have seen population growth, which can lead to larger class sizes as schools struggle to accommodate increasing numbers of students. Saskatchewan school divisions have also experienced significant funding challenges. Limited or unpredictable budgets can prevent schools from hiring more teachers or support staff. Education funding is often a contentious political issue, and budget cuts or insufficient increases can lead to larger class sizes. Rural school divisions, like GSSD also face the additional challenge of teacher availability. In these cases, class sizes may increase as the available teachers are spread more thinly.

In response to increasing class sizes, school divisions like GSSD have considered a variety of approaches:

- **Advocate to the Provincial Government for Increased Funding:** School divisions have worked to make the case to policymakers and the public that increased funding is needed to reduce class sizes. This includes lobbying, public relations campaigns, or other forms of advocacy.
- **Implement Innovative Solutions:** For instance, some schools are experimenting with co-teaching models, where two teachers jointly teach a larger class. Technology can also be used to manage larger classes or to personalize instruction, though it is not a panacea and requires thoughtful implementation.
- **Redraw School Boundaries:** School divisions might be able to balance class sizes better by redrawing school boundaries, although this can be a politically sensitive issue.

Question:

Why do school divisions employ so many people at central office?

Answer:

School divisions like GSSD employ a significant number of people at their central offices to ensure that the overall operations of the division run smoothly. Even if the central office staff constitutes a

small percentage of the total budget (in our case approximately 3%), their roles are crucial to the success of the entire school system.

The central office typically includes various departments, each of which plays a significant part in the functioning of the school division:

- **The Director or CEO:** This person provides leadership for the entire division, making critical decisions about policies, budgeting, and long-term strategic planning. They ensure that the school division adheres to all relevant legal requirements and educational standards, and they often represent the division in communication with the public or other external stakeholders.
- **Superintendent of Education:** The Superintendent works closely with the CEO and is typically responsible for overseeing all educational aspects of the division, from curriculum development to student achievement. They often liaise with school principals and other staff to implement policies and programs that improve the quality of education.
- **CFO:** The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in a Saskatchewan School Division plays a critical role in ensuring that the financial operations of the school division align with its strategic goals, mission, and vision.
- **Managers and Supervisors:** These staff members oversee specific departments or functions within the school division, such as human resources, finance, or special education. Their job is to ensure that their departments function effectively and meet the division's overall objectives.
- **Transportation Department:** This team is responsible for managing all aspects of student transportation, from planning bus routes to ensuring the safety of students while they are being transported to and from school.
- **IT Department:** The IT team is crucial, particularly in an increasingly digital age. They manage and maintain the school division's technology infrastructure, including computer systems, software, and internet connectivity, and support the implementation of digital learning tools.
- **Facilities Department:** This department oversees the maintenance and management of the school division's physical facilities, ensuring that they are safe, clean, and conducive to learning.

The Good Spirit School Division's focus on classroom supports underscores the critical role of these central office departments. They work together to create an environment in which teachers can teach effectively, and students can learn and thrive. The goal is to minimize any distractions or hindrances to the learning process and to provide teachers with the resources they need to deliver high-quality instruction.

Respectfully submitted,

Quintin M. Robertson, Director/CEO
Good Spirit School Division