

Still waiting for Truth and Reconciliation

A progress report on Indigenous education
in Ontario's publicly funded schools

April 2023

© People for Education, 2023

People for Education is an independent, non-partisan, charitable organization working to support and advance public education through research, policy, and public engagement.

Charitable No. 85719 0532 RR0001

www.peopleforeducation.ca

Notice of copyright and intellectual property

The Annual Ontario School Survey was developed by People for Education and the Metro Parent Network. People for Education owns the copyright on all intellectual property that is part of this project.

Use of any questions contained in the survey, or any of the intellectual property developed to support administration of the survey, is strictly prohibited without the express written permission of People for Education.

Questions about the use of intellectual property should be addressed to the Director, Policy and Research, People for Education, info@peopleforeducation.ca.

Data from the survey

Specific research data from the survey can be provided for a fee. Elementary school data have been collected since 1997, and secondary school data have been collected since 2000. For more information, please contact info@peopleforeducation.ca.

Document citation

People for Education. 2023. “Still waiting for Truth and Reconciliation: A progress report on Indigenous education in Ontario’s publicly funded schools.” Toronto: People for Education.

Authors

Jasmine Hodgson-Bautista
Robin Liu Hopson

Reviewers

Thank you to everyone below who provided valuable insights during the development of this report, as well as those individuals and organizations not listed here.

Michael Staruck, Chiefs of Ontario
Vanessa Stoby, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
Public Good Initiative 2022-2023 Student Consultants: Neha Anwar, Salma Malin, Fatimah Nadhum, and Vicky Zhou

Acknowledgements

People for Education is supported by thousands of individual donors, and the work and dedication of hundreds of volunteers. We also receive support from the following funders:



Margaret McCain



Every year, principals in schools across Ontario take the time to complete our survey and share their stories with us. This work would not be possible without them.

Contents

Introduction	1
Quick facts	2
Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Actions for education	3
Ontario's response to the Calls to Action	4
Professional development on Indigenous education	6
Indigenous studies courses	8
Indigenous guest speakers, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers	10
Community consultations and partnerships	12
Incorporating Indigenous cultures, ways of knowing, teachings, and languages	14
Regional differences in Indigenous education	17
Conclusions and recommendations	19
Appendix: Methodology	20
Endnotes	22
Bibliography	24

Introduction

Findings from People for Education’s 2022-23 Annual Ontario School Survey (AOSS) indicate that Ontario’s publicly funded schools are showing signs of progress in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action for education.

It has been eight years since the TRC issued its Calls to Action to support reconciliation in Canada, with Calls to Action 6-12 and 62-66 specifically addressing children, youth, and education. While some progress has been made, a recent report from the Yellowhead Institute found that only 13 of the 94 Calls to Action have been fully implemented, and none of these completed calls are those focused on education.¹

Using data from People for Education’s annual survey, based on responses from 1,044 schools across all the province’s 72 publicly funded school boards, this report provides an overview of how Ontario is doing in response to the TRC’s Calls to Action for education, and the progress Ontario schools have made on implementing Indigenous education strategies and programs over the last decade.

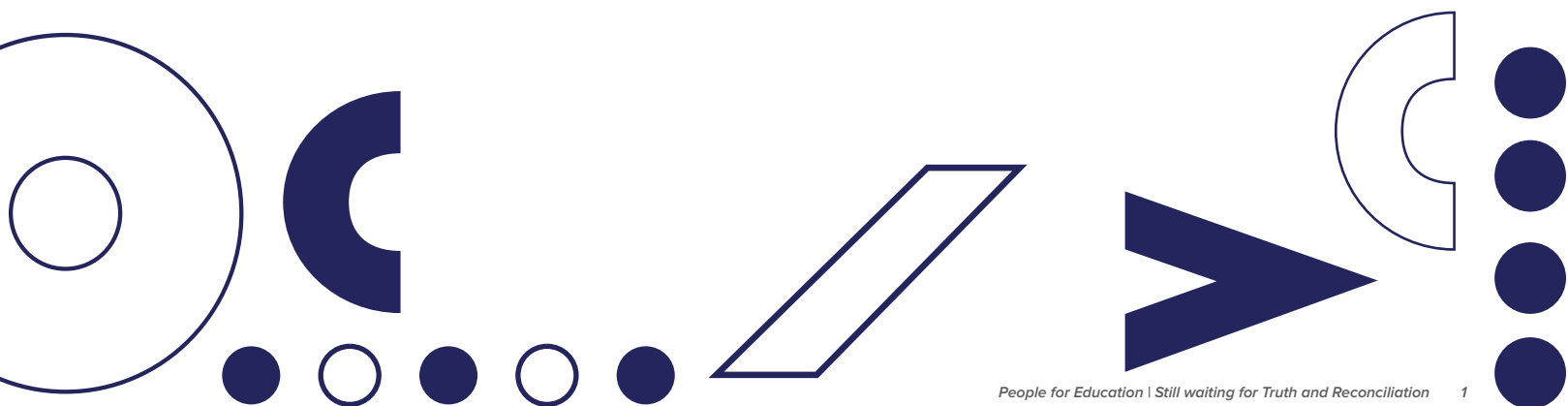
These findings focus only on provincially funded schools in Ontario school boards, and do not include First Nations schools located on reserves. According to the Ministry of Education, more than 80% of Indigenous students attend provincially funded schools.² So, while this report does not provide information about First Nations education on reserves, it does offer insight about the progress of Indigenous education programs in provincially funded schools which are attended by the vast majority of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the province.

According to The Honourable Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, education has a key role to play in long-term reconciliation, and changes in our education systems must include improvements in the education of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

“Education is what got us into this mess — the use of education in terms of residential schools — but education is the key to reconciliation. We need to look at the way we are educating children. That's why we say that this is not an Aboriginal problem. It's a Canadian problem.”³

Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

It is important to recognize that there is much diversity within First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities in Ontario. Please note that the use of the term “Indigenous” in this report refers to all the distinct cultures, nations, and individuals within First Nation, Métis, and Inuit populations living in the province.



Quick facts

The proportion of schools reporting professional development for school staff has more than doubled over the last decade for elementary schools, from 34% in 2012-13 to 76% in 2022-23, and for secondary schools, from 34% in 2012-13 to 82% in 2022-23.

72% of secondary schools reported offering an Indigenous studies course (e.g., NBE/NBF3U) in 2022-23, compared to 40% of secondary schools in 2013-14.

Between 2012 and 2022, the proportion of schools offering Indigenous languages programs has increased from 4% to 13% for elementary schools, and from 11% to 20% for secondary schools.

In 2022-23, 72% of schools in Northern Ontario reported offering activities such as ceremonies and land-based activities (e.g., medicine walks, drumming, dancing, storytelling), compared to 30% of schools in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).



Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action for education and youth

<p>6 We call upon the Government of Canada to repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada.</p>	<p>62 We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 students. 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.
<p>7 We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.</p>	<p>63 We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect. iv. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.
<p>8 We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves.</p>	<p>64 We call upon all levels of government that provide public funds to denominational schools to require such schools to provide an education on comparative religious studies, which must include a segment on Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and practices developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Elders.</p>
<p>9 We call upon the federal government to prepare and publish annual reports comparing funding for the education of First Nations children on and off reserves, as well as educational and income attainments of Aboriginal peoples in Canada compared with non-Aboriginal people.</p>	<p>65 We call upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation.</p>
<p>10 We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation. ii. Improving education attainment levels and success rates. iii. Developing culturally appropriate curricula. iv. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses. v. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems. vi. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children. vii. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships. 	<p>66 We call upon the federal government to establish multiyear funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation, and establish a national network to share information and best practices.</p>
<p>11 We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.</p>	
<p>12 We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.</p>	

Figure 1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action pertaining to education and young people

Ontario's response to the Calls to Action related to education

Over the last 16 years, Indigenous education policy in Ontario has been punctuated by a number of reports, frameworks, goals, and changes to funding.

In 2007, Ontario launched its First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. The Framework outlined two targets to be achieved by 2016: improving achievement among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students and closing gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in literacy and numeracy scores, graduation rates, and advancement to post-secondary education. At the same time, the province acknowledged the importance of having accurate data to track whether these goals were being achieved. To that end, the Ministry of Education released guidelines to support school boards in developing a voluntary, confidential self-identification process for Indigenous students.⁴

Nearly a decade after the release of the 2007 Policy Framework, the Ontario government released *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*. The 2016 strategy emphasized a commitment to “address the legacy of residential schools, close gaps and remove barriers, support Indigenous culture, and reconcile relationships with Indigenous peoples.”⁵

In 2017, in a further step toward reconciliation, and in response to Calls to Action 62 and 63 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the province made a commitment to revise the Ontario curriculum by fall 2018 so that it would include mandatory Indigenous-focused content for grades 4, 5, and 6 Social Studies and grades 7, 8, and 10 History.⁶

Four years later, a new Ontario government reiterated previous governments' commitments to work with Indigenous partners to support First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement and well-being by closing the achievement gap and increasing every student's knowledge of Indigenous perspectives, histories, and cultures.⁷ The 2021 announcement included a plan to work with Indigenous partners to add mandatory Indigenous-focused curriculum to Social Studies for grades 1-3 by September 2023. The content was to focus on the role of family and resilience in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, Indigenous historical and contemporary realities, Indigenous peoples' connection with the land, the residential school system, and the reclamation of identity, language, culture, and community connections.⁸ As of April 2023, the revamped curriculum had not yet been released.

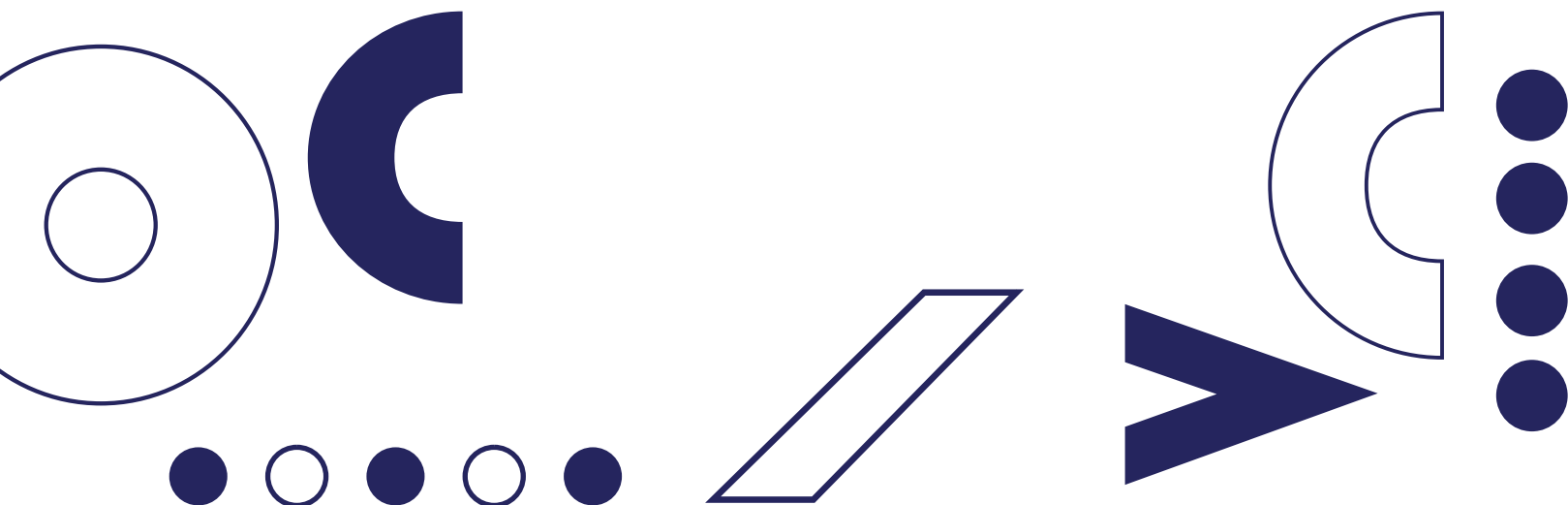
Science curriculum unilaterally changed

In the spring of 2022, the province released new Science and Technology Curriculum for grades 1-8. However, despite having worked with Indigenous partners on the curriculum, the government made a unilateral decision to remove or substantially modify sixteen Indigenous-related expectations in the curriculum just three weeks before its release.⁹ For example, the original curriculum explicitly named that students would “explore real-world issues by connecting Indigenous sciences and technologies and Western science and technology, using ways of knowing such as the Two-Eyed Seeing approach...”. This approach allows an understanding of science that includes both Western and Indigenous perspectives. Instead, the final version generally states that students will “analyze science and technology contributions from various communities.”¹⁰

Slow progress on data collection

Data collection forms a key component of both the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the recommendations from the UN on Canada's lack of progress in implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹¹ Without data, and in particular, race-based data, it is impossible to know if numerous policy goals are being met.¹² While school boards in Ontario are now required to collect race-based data (as of 2023), it is not yet clear whether this work has been completed. Likewise, through school boards have been encouraged to implement voluntary, confidential Indigenous self-identification initiatives since 2007, it remains difficult to find out what progress has been made.

In the 2022-23 school year, Ontario's Ministry of Education allocated \$120.5 million in the Indigenous Education Grant, intended to fund "programs and initiatives to support the academic success and well-being of Indigenous students, as well as build the knowledge of all students and educators on Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives and contributions."¹³ The funding is allocated to school boards based on their total enrolment, the number of students in Indigenous studies and language programs, and the number of students who have self-identified as Indigenous. However, since Ontario appears to be behind in its collection and reporting of race-based and Indigenous student data, it is not clear if funding is being allocated where it is most needed.



Professional development on Indigenous education an increasingly common starting point

“We want to do more but need help and direction with what to do and how to do it.”

Elementary school principal, Southwestern Ontario

Staff professional development is essential to effectively incorporating Indigenous histories and curriculum in classrooms (i.e., Calls to Action 62 and 63). Professional development was the most reported Indigenous education opportunity offered across the province’s publicly funded elementary (76%) and secondary (82%) schools. The proportion of schools reporting professional development for school staff has more than doubled for elementary (34% in 2012 to 76% in 2022) and secondary schools (34% in 2012 and 82% in 2022) over the last decade.

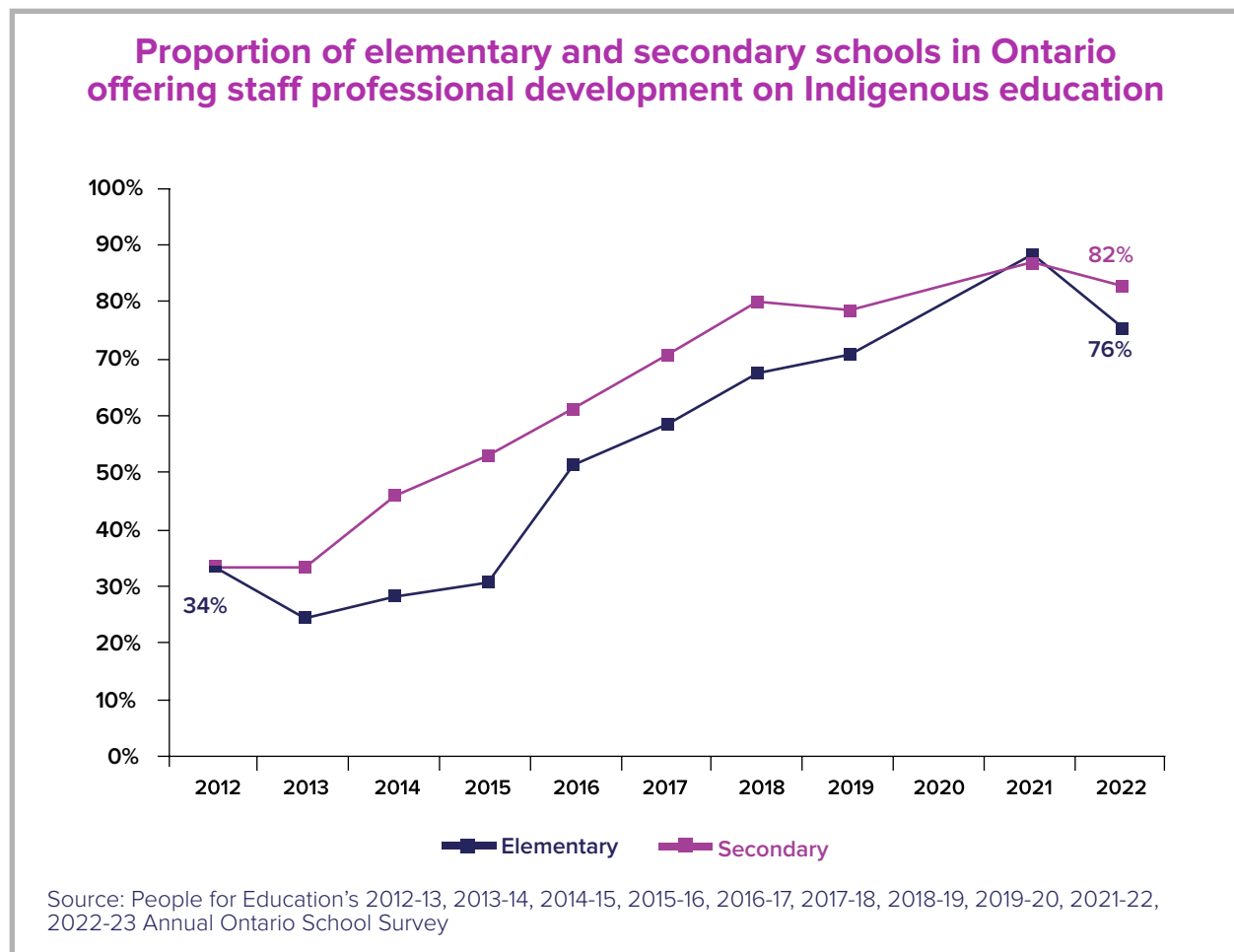


Figure 2. Proportion of elementary and secondary schools in Ontario offering staff professional development on Indigenous education, 2012-2013 to 2022-2023

In their responses to the AOSS 2022-23, principals often cited the value of professional development on Indigenous education. Principals noted that a supportive school board that prioritizes Indigenous education, along with having a dedicated staff member in school leading the work, were valuable when offering staff professional development opportunities.

“Having a System Principal of Indigenous Rights and Education has really helped to ensure that we have open communication between our Treaty Partner and the board, and this is translating into better services and understanding at the school level.”

Elementary school principal, GTA

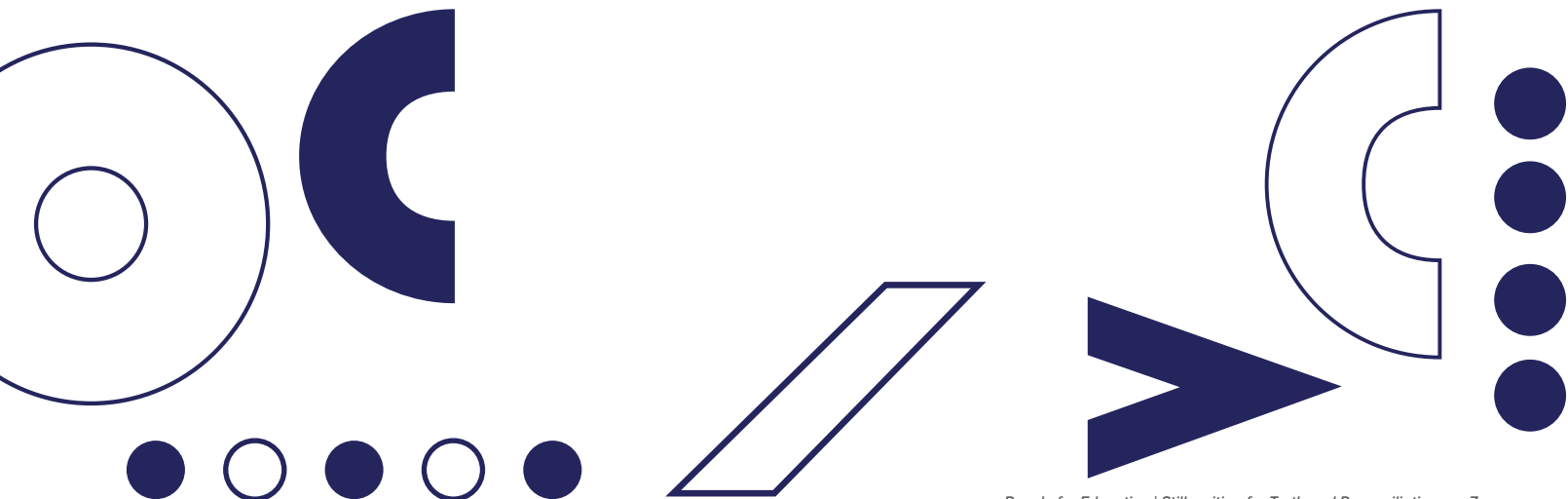
Some barriers mentioned by principals included finding the time for professional development, competing priorities with other equity focuses, and staff or board hesitancy or discomfort with Indigenous-focused content.

“Time and priority. With so little staff meeting time and the focus for those being on math and literacy instruction, there is no time to run staff PD for Indigenous studies. We cannot have PLC [professional learning community] time as we are unable to get supply coverage.”

Elementary school principal, Eastern Ontario

“People are interested in doing the work but are fearful at times about offending members of the Indigenous community. We need to continue to build partnerships and have representation in the work that we do.”

Secondary school principal, GTA



Increase in secondary schools offering and mandating Indigenous studies courses

In February 2023, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) joined a growing list of school boards in the province who are making the shift to replace the compulsory grade 11 English course (i.e., ENG3U/C/E) with an Indigenous-focused course centered on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit voices (i.e., NBE3U).¹⁴ The course, titled Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices, is currently offered as an alternative English course, along with other optional Indigenous-focused courses for secondary school students, in the revised 2019 Ontario Curriculum grades 9 to 12 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies.¹⁵ For French-language schools, this change would mean replacing the grade 11 French course (i.e., FRA3U/C/E) with the course titled, Découvrir les voix contemporaines des Premières Nations, des Métis et des Inuits (i.e., NBF3U).

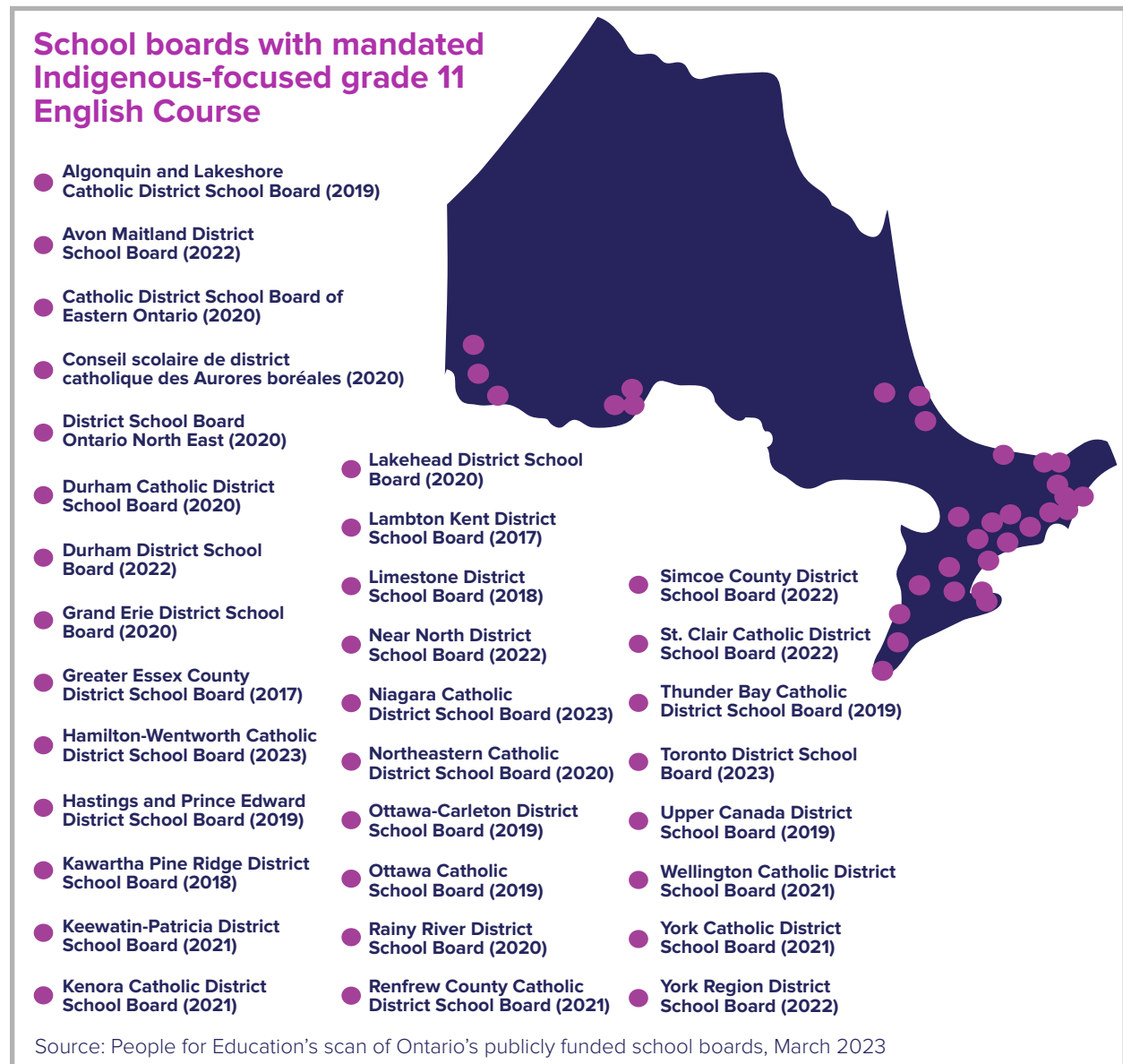


Figure 3. Ontario school boards who have mandated the grade 11 English course, NBE3U: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices (February 2023)

Figure 3 lists the 32 school boards in Ontario who have mandated NBE3U as of February 2023. A handful of other boards are also in the process of following suit. For example, Halton District School Board (HDSB) and Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) have plans in place to mandate NBE3U by the beginning of the upcoming 2023-2024 school year.¹⁶

Some schools who participated in AOSS 2022-23 have chosen to offer the Indigenous studies course NBE3U as the only option for students' grade 11 compulsory English credit despite it not being mandated by their board. Many of these principals noted that the Indigenous studies courses offered were popular with students and generally supported by the school community, although some said that they experienced resistance to the course. A secondary school principal in Central Ontario reported that, "It is sometimes challenging to get all students/families to recognize the importance of this learning. For instance, we are offering only the NBE courses for Gr. 11 English and we have experienced some resistance from the school community."

Longitudinal AOSS data shows that the proportion of secondary schools offering any Indigenous studies course rose from 40% in 2013 to 72% in 2022, indicating Ontario secondary schools have made significant progress on incorporating Indigenous-focused courses over the past decade, and as more school boards make plans to mandate NBE/NBF3U, that growth will likely continue.

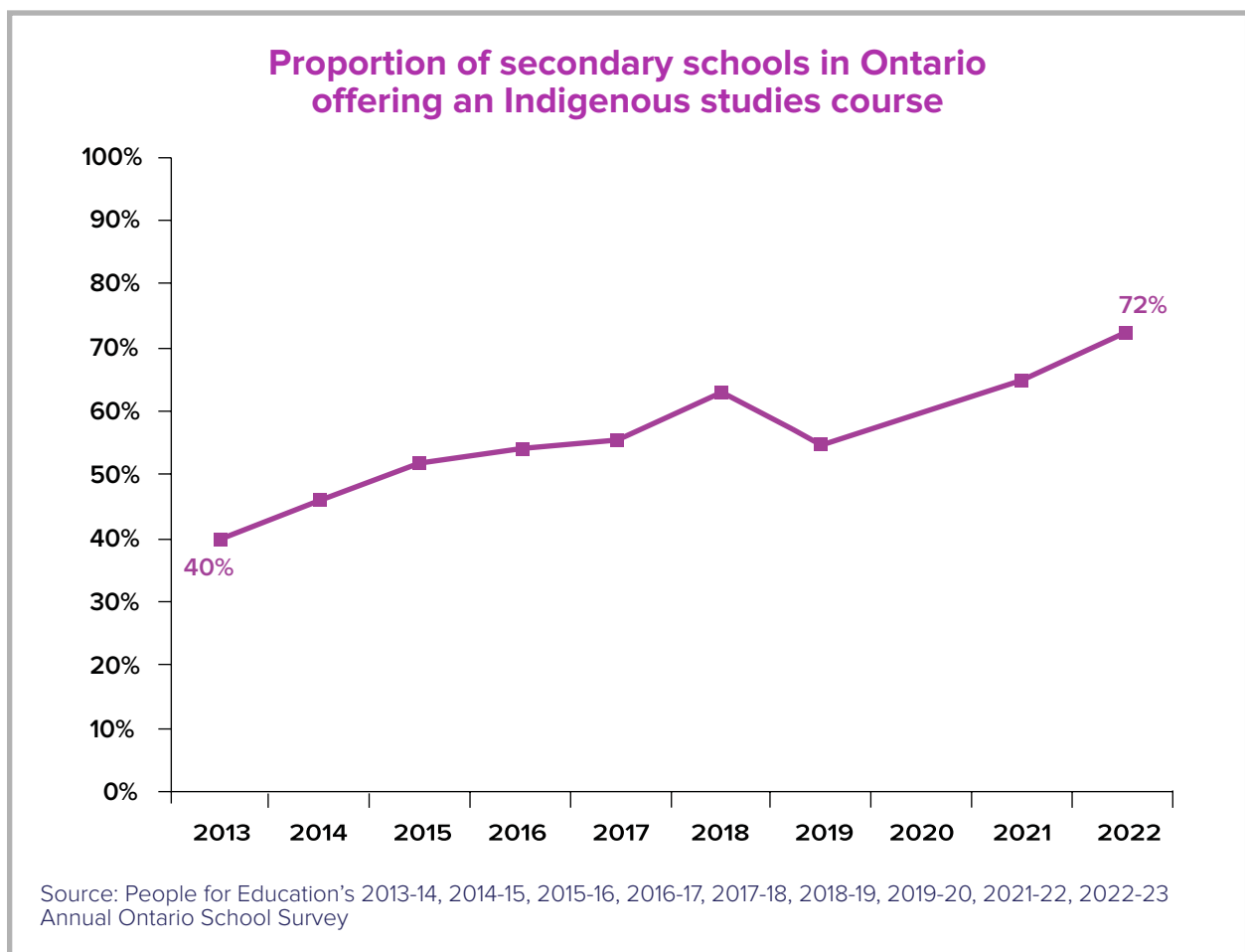


Figure 4. Proportion of secondary schools in Ontario offering an Indigenous studies course (e.g., NBE/NBF3U), 2013-2014 to 2022-2023

More Ontario schools working with Indigenous guest speakers, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers

“Our district has great partnerships with local Indigenous knowledge keepers and our students and staff have lots of opportunities to learn from them.”

Elementary school principal, Southwestern Ontario

In the TRC’s Calls to Action, Call 63 includes a focus on building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.¹⁷ Prioritizing opportunities for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis guest speakers, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers to visit and develop relationships with Ontario schools is vital to build this capacity in students as it provides students with access to Indigenous perspectives and cultures. In 2022-23, 41% of elementary schools and 68% of secondary schools reported offering opportunities to talk with Indigenous Elders and/or Knowledge Keepers. Moreover, the proportion of schools reporting that they had Indigenous guest speakers rose significantly over the last decade, increasing from 23% in 2012 to 55% in 2022 for elementary schools and from 41% in 2012 to 76% in 2022 for secondary schools.

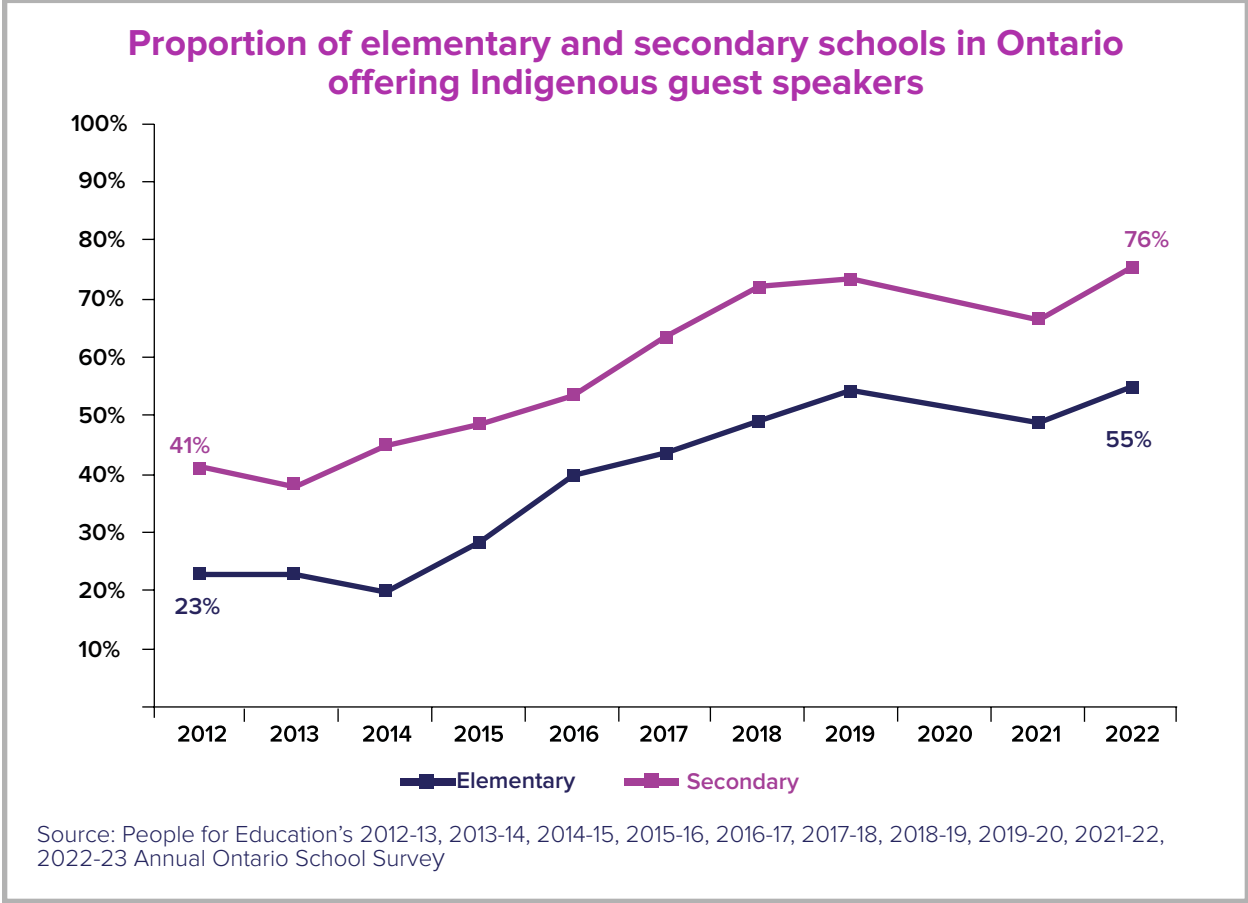
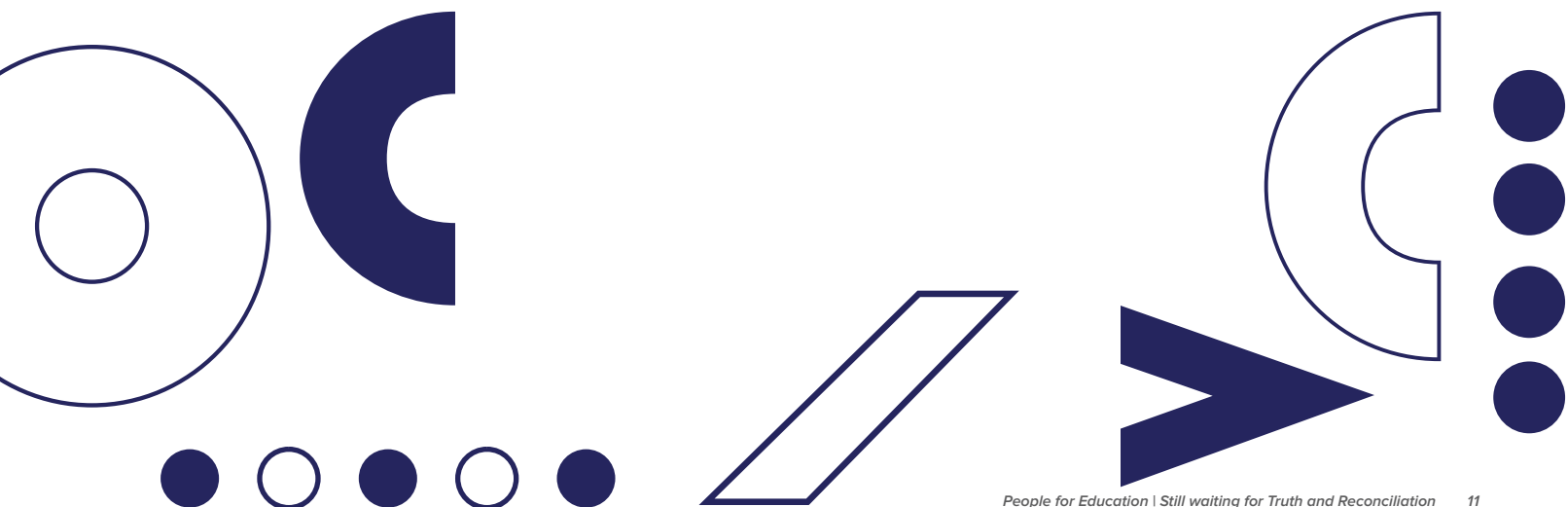


Figure 5. Proportion of elementary and secondary schools in Ontario offering Indigenous guest speakers, 2012-13 to 2022-23

Beyond having Indigenous guest speakers, principals talked about the importance of creating extended opportunities for Indigenous Elders, speakers, and Knowledge Keepers to build relationships with their students and school communities through a range of activities. They said that staff and students greatly benefited from learning with them. A secondary school principal from Eastern Ontario reported, “We have a resident Knowledge Keeper who builds canoes and wigwams. Our students are learning through building, creating and storytelling.”

On the other hand, not all principals said that they had access to these individuals, with some saying that they did not have enough board support, funds, or community partnerships to facilitate these relationships. One elementary school principal from Southwestern Ontario wrote that, “Some people are able to access money for guest speakers and other opportunities, but it is not universal.”

There have been steady increases over the last decade in the proportion of schools offering the Indigenous education opportunities that People for Education asks about on the AOSS. However, in the AOSS 2022-23, principals called attention to some areas where more work needs to be prioritized: community consultations and partnerships, offering cultural support programs, and support for resources and teacher training.



Community consultations and partnerships are integral to advancing Indigenous education

“We work hard at our relationships with our Indigenous partners and families and look for opportunities to learn together.”

Elementary school principal, Northern Ontario

Strong relationship building between First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities and non-Indigenous communities, consultation with Indigenous communities about educational priorities, and partnerships with Indigenous community organizations are all key to responding to the TRC’s Calls to Action for education. The proportion of elementary schools that offer consultation with Indigenous community organizations about education priorities rose from 12% in 2012 to 36% in 2022, while secondary schools saw an increase from 28% in 2012 to 59% in 2022.

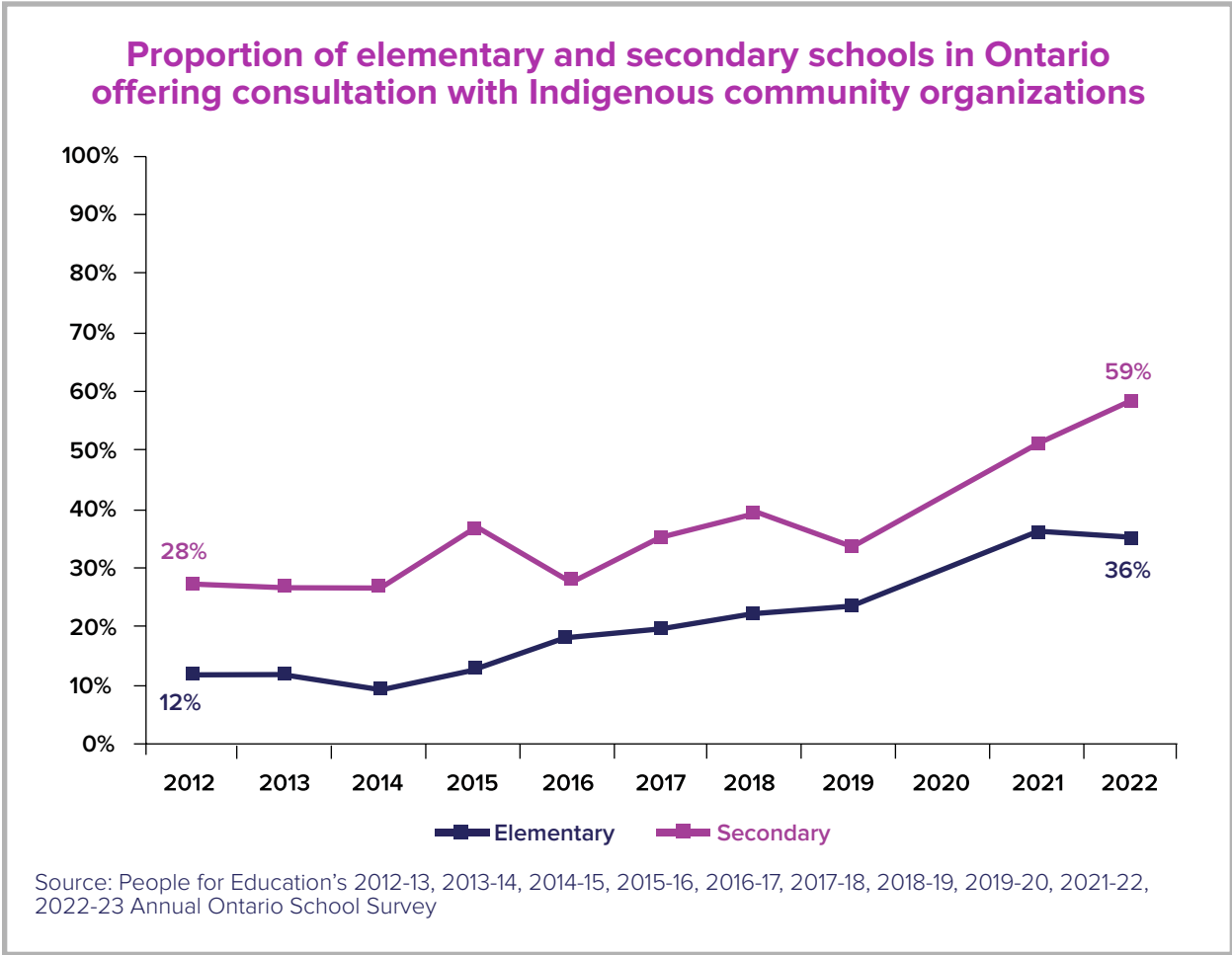


Figure 6. Proportion of elementary and secondary schools in Ontario offering consultation with Indigenous community organizations about educational priorities, 2012-13 to 2022-23

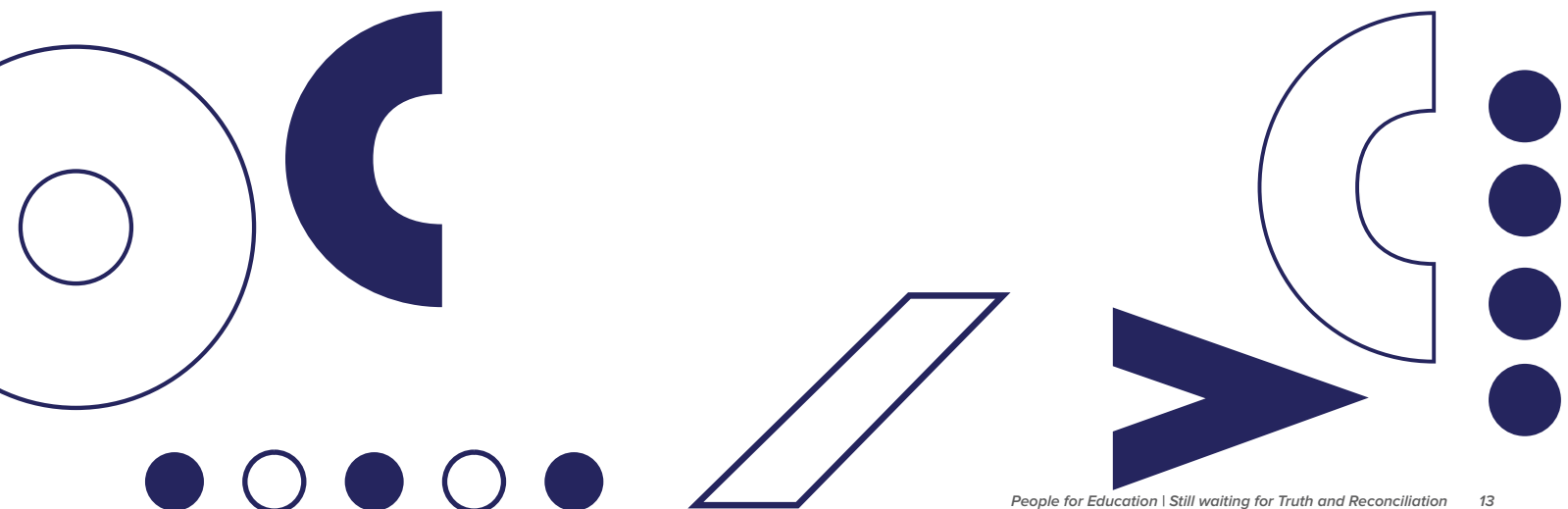
“We have connected with some families who are sharing their expertise, for example, developing a display of Indigenous resources in the library, smudging ceremony, outdoor learning, grandfather teachings.”

Elementary school principal, Southwestern Ontario

While some principals reported that their schools had strong partnerships with local Indigenous communities, others said they were still working on building community relationships or noted that they needed support from their school board as well as the Ministry of Education to do this work. Principals also told us that relationships with Indigenous students’ families were sources of connection to and learning about Indigenous perspectives, teachings, and cultures.

“We have a partnership with [name of Indigenous community]. Their program lives in our school, with an Indigenous Youth Outreach Worker providing mentorship opportunities, in-school math and literacy supports, in-school and after school cultural programming and nutritional supports. We collaborate to celebrate an annual powwow, a true highlight at our school. Our Ojibwe Language program continues to grow with an increasing number of students opting to take Ojibwe instead of French as a Second Language each year. Educational staff are open to learning and to providing land-based learning opportunities for students.”

Elementary school principal, Northern Ontario



Incorporating Indigenous cultures, ways of knowing, teachings, and language

The TRC’s Calls to Action for education are not only important to support the Indigenous youth in our schools, but also to educate non-Indigenous students about residential schools and Indigenous culture, history, and ways of knowing. It is important that Indigenous students see themselves reflected in their education, and that they feel that their communities and cultures are valued and connected to school.¹⁸

Offering cultural support programs in schools not only provides a valuable resource to Indigenous students, but they also help to integrate Indigenous perspectives more holistically in the school community. Cultural support programs include things like creating an Indigenous-focused student success team or dedicating an Indigenous space like a smudge room or garden on school property.

The proportion of elementary schools reporting that they offer cultural support programs rose from 9% in 2012 to 36% in 2022; for secondary schools, the proportion of schools offering cultural support programs increased from 22% in 2012 to 51% in 2022. These are significant increases over the past decade, but cultural support programs were still one of the least reported Indigenous education opportunities compared to all other opportunities.

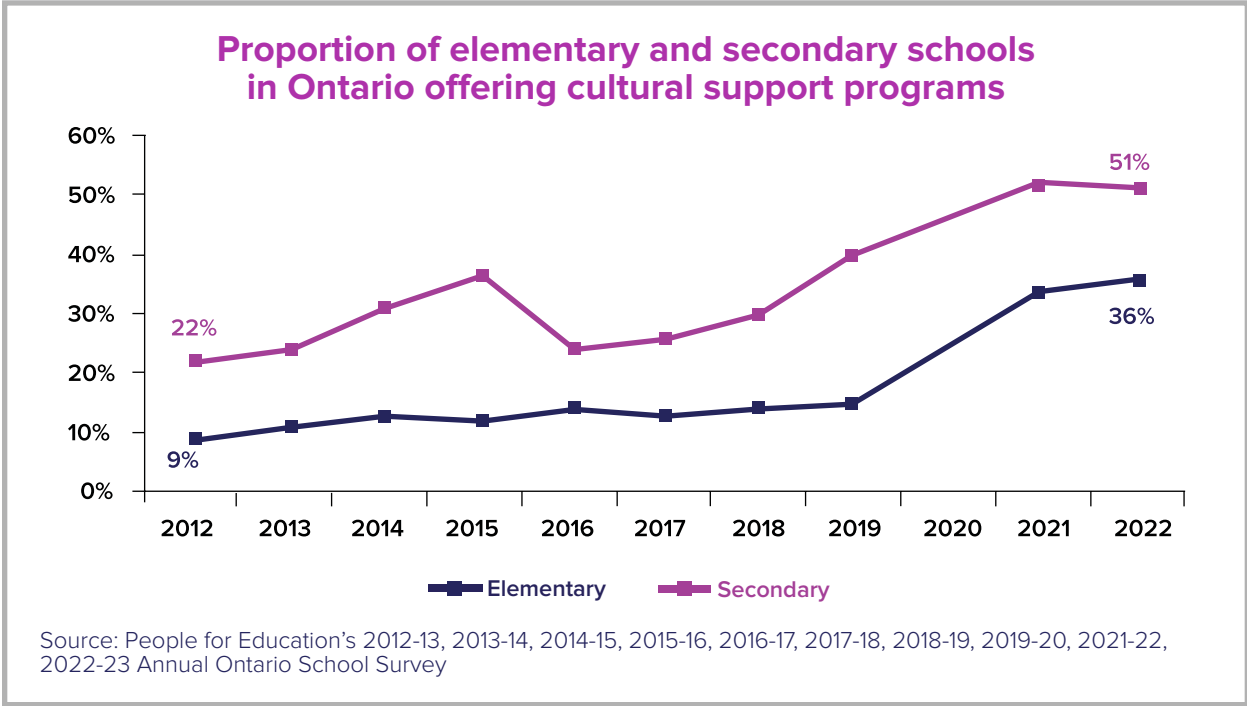


Figure 7. Proportion of elementary and secondary schools in Ontario offering cultural support programs, 2012-13 to 2022-23

Another way Ontario schools are working to support Indigenous students is through offering activities such as ceremonies and land-based activities like drumming, dancing, medicine walks, and storytelling. These activities support Indigenous students by connecting the school community to Indigenous students' families and communities outside the school and help to incorporate Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing more holistically in the school community through experiential learning for all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

“We have an Outdoor Education program for all primary students that focuses on looking at the land we live on through an Indigenous lens. One of the parents on our grounds & greening committee (which manages a teaching garden & works with the outdoor ed teacher) is Indigenous and helps us to reflect & question.”

Elementary school principal, GTA

In 2022-23, 44% of elementary schools and 56% of secondary schools reported that they offer activities such as ceremonies and land-based activities (e.g., medicine walks, drumming, dancing, storytelling).

Principals also listed various ways in which their schools were working to support Indigenous students and incorporate Indigenous cultures and teachings holistically. One school installed a courtyard healing circle. A few principals mentioned that their school had a smudge room or smudging retreats. Others said that students had opportunities to participate in experiential learning, Indigenous cooking, gardening, land-based activities, storytelling, art, and the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

“We have been able to collaborate in an amazing whole-school living reconciliation on important lands and learning to integrate circles, treaties, and relationships with each other and the land by learning from Indigenous educators and Elders.”

Elementary school principal, Southwestern Ontario

Indigenous Languages Programs

Offering an Indigenous languages program in school is another way Ontario elementary and secondary schools can support Indigenous students. The TRC's Call to Action 10 calls for protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, which includes the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses in school, along with a commitment to sufficient funding in this area.¹⁹

In 2022-23, the least reported Indigenous education opportunity was Indigenous languages programs for both elementary (13%) and secondary schools (20%). Although they were the least reported education opportunity, the proportion of schools reporting it still increased from 2012 to 2022 (from 4% to 13% for elementary schools and from 11% to 20% for secondary schools).

In the 2022-23 AOSS, principals said that they wanted to offer Indigenous languages courses, with some mentioning that it was challenging to find a qualified Indigenous languages teacher. Funding was mentioned by principals as another major barrier to offering Indigenous languages programming in school.

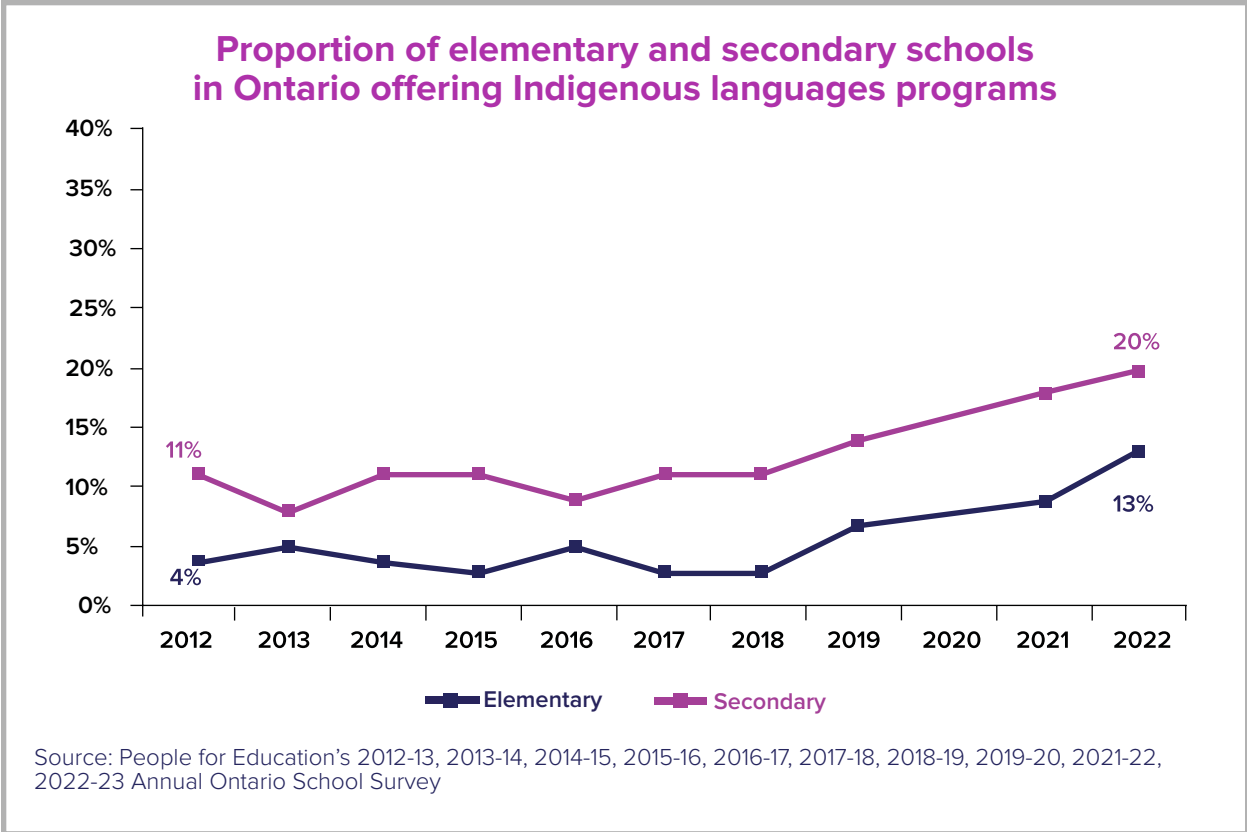


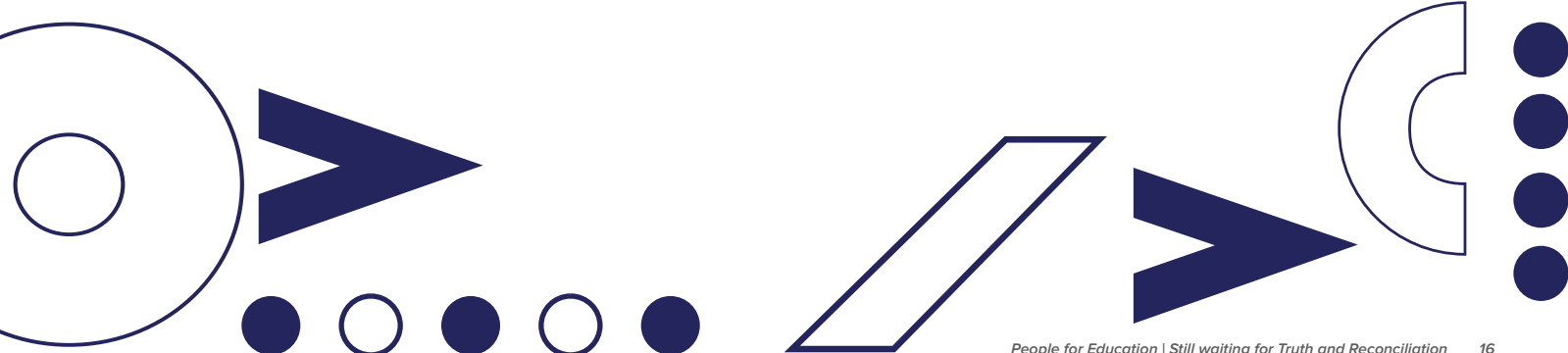
Figure 8. Proportion of elementary and secondary schools in Ontario offering Indigenous languages programs, 2012-2013 to 2022-2023

“We have a large percentage of Indigenous students. I would like to offer NSL [Native as a Second Language], but we cannot secure a native speaker to teach this course.”

Elementary school principal, Northern Ontario

“Finding a language speaker to take on our Anishnaabemowin class on a consistent basis has been a significant barrier.”

Elementary school teacher, Southwestern Ontario



Access to Indigenous education differs by region and level of schooling

In 2022-23, secondary schools were more likely than elementary schools to offer Indigenous education opportunities. The biggest differences between elementary and secondary schools were in the proportions of schools that reported offering opportunities to speak with Indigenous Elders and/or Knowledge Keepers (41% of elementary schools compared to 68% of secondary schools), consultation with Indigenous community organizations about educational priorities (36% of elementary schools compared to 59% of secondary schools), and Indigenous guest speakers (55% of elementary schools compared to 76% of secondary schools).

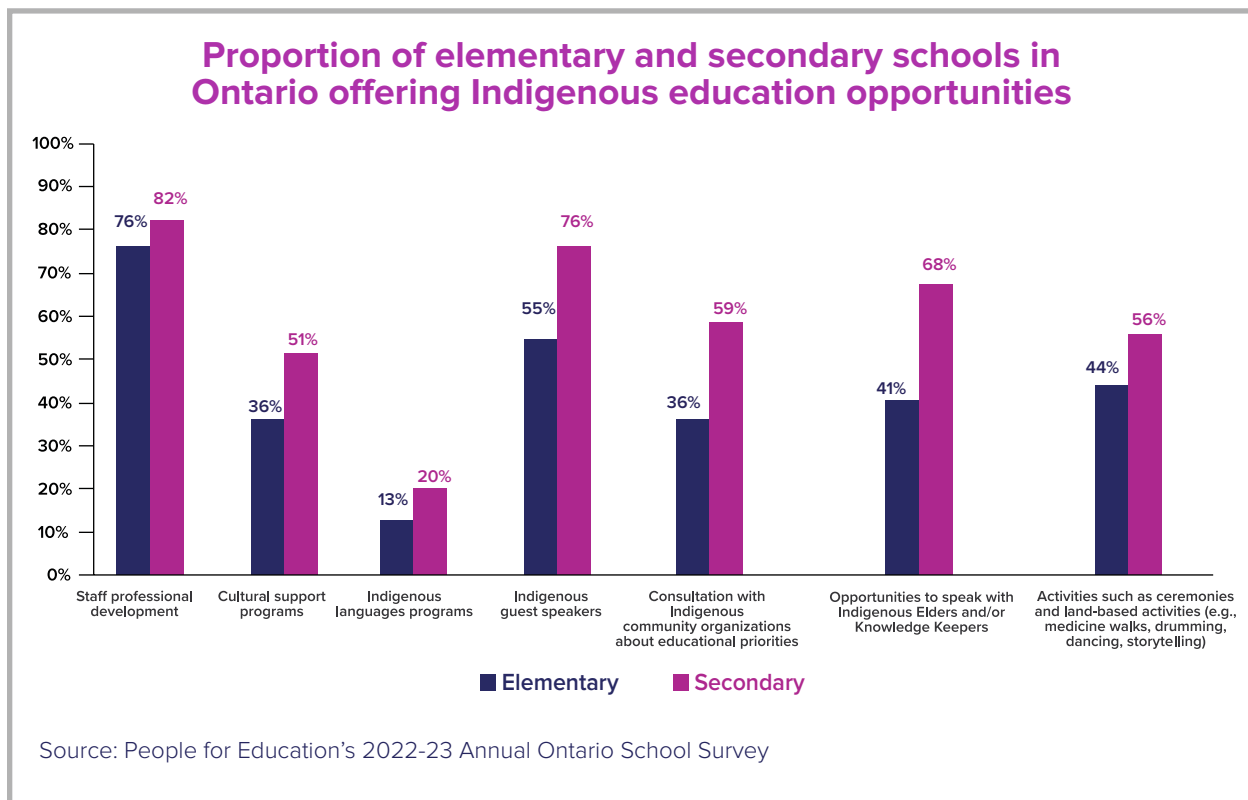


Figure 9. Proportion of elementary and secondary schools in Ontario offering Indigenous education opportunities, 2022-2023

Moreover, there are regional differences in Indigenous education opportunities across the province. Generally, schools in Northern Ontario were more likely to offer Indigenous education opportunities, while schools in the GTA were least likely to offer these opportunities. While some responses from schools in Northern Ontario highlighted serving larger populations of Indigenous students, recent data from Statistics Canada show that the Indigenous population living in large urban population centers has grown by 12.5% from 2016 to 2021.²⁰

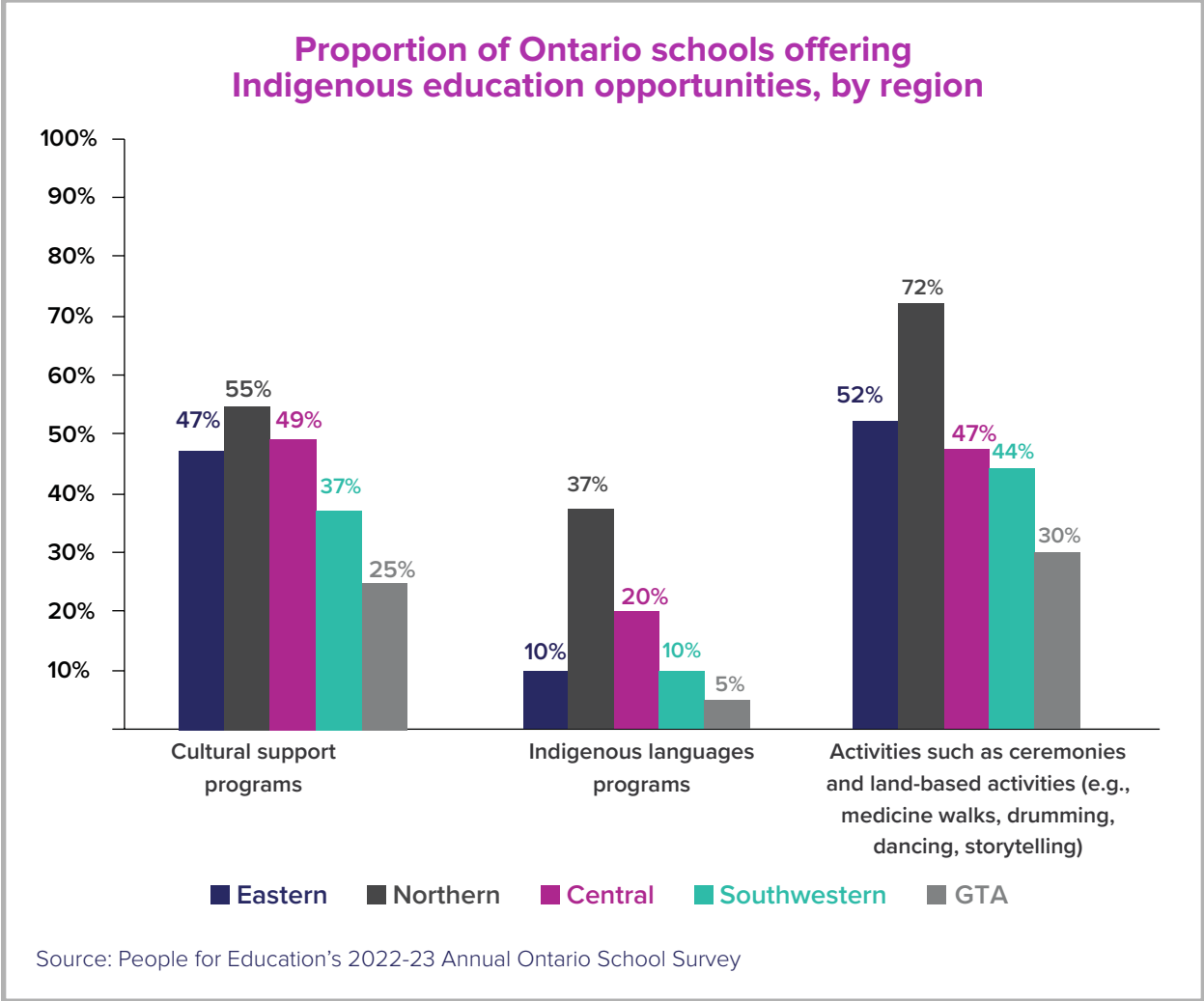


Figure 10. Proportion of Ontario schools offering Indigenous education opportunities, by region, 2022-2023

The largest differences regionally were in the proportion of schools that offered cultural support programs (55% of Northern Ontario schools compared to 25% of GTA schools), Indigenous languages programs (37% of Northern Ontario schools compared to 5% of GTA schools), and activities such as ceremonies and land-based activities (72% of Northern Ontario schools compared to 30% of GTA schools). On the other hand, secondary schools in Northern Ontario (61%) were least likely to offer an Indigenous studies course compared to secondary schools in Central Ontario (82%), Southwestern Ontario (81%), the GTA (73%), and Eastern Ontario (71%).

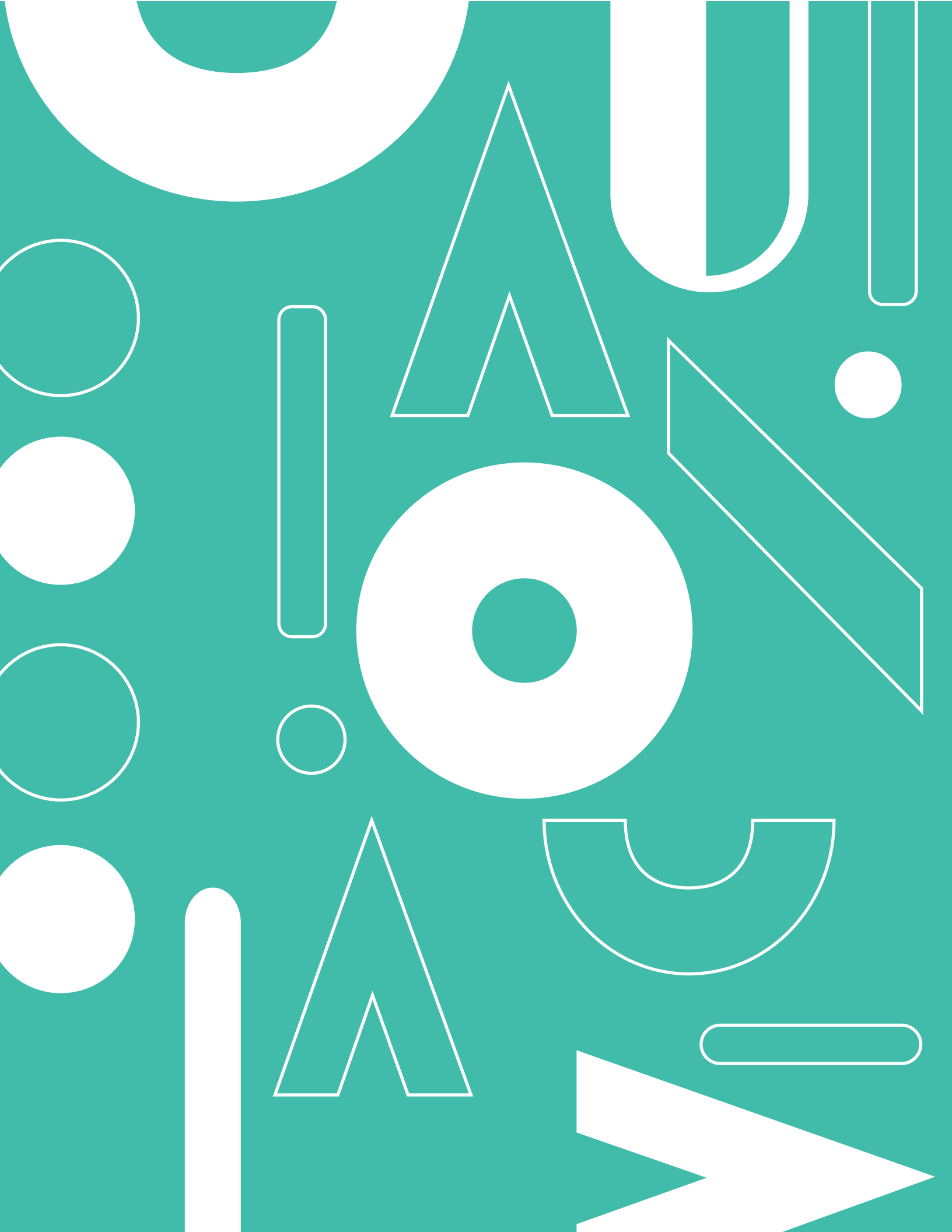
Conclusion and recommendations

There is more work to be done for Truth and Reconciliation in education

People for Education's latest findings illustrate that progress has been made in the past decade to advance Indigenous education across publicly funded schools in Ontario, but overall, Canada still has a long way to go in completely fulfilling the TRC's eleven Calls to Action regarding education. These Calls to Action emphasize the importance of informed consent, full participation, consultation, and collaboration with Indigenous peoples; all components that require building partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. So, while commitments to work together in the form of public statements and policy documents such as school curriculum are a critical first step, they alone are not enough for truth and reconciliation.

To move forward in supporting the TRC's Calls to Action regarding education and young people, People for Education has three recommendations for the Ontario Ministry of Education:

1. Mandate the NBE/NBF3U Indigenous studies course in place of grade 11 English/French at the provincial level, and increase the number of elementary and secondary schools offering Indigenous languages and programs by providing funding and resources for:
 - a. The recruitment, hiring, and retention of Indigenous education workers and teachers, in collaboration with school boards and post-secondary faculties of education.
 - b. Frequent, timely, and meaningful professional development opportunities to support educators in implementing Indigenous education.
 - c. Improved data collection and reporting on the status, experience, and outcomes of Indigenous students.
2. Provide dedicated funding for positions in schools, boards, and government that are focused on promoting and supporting effective programs on Indigenous languages and ways of knowing more holistically from kindergarten to grade 12.
3. Convene a taskforce of diverse and regionally reflective Indigenous educators and Elders to support the Ministry of Education and the 72 publicly funded school boards across Ontario in responding to the Calls to Action regarding education and young people. Activities would include the co-development of curriculum and updating the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework that was originally published in 2007.²¹



Appendix: Methodology

This report is based on data from 1,044 schools from all 72 publicly funded Ontario school boards that participated in the 2022-23 Annual Ontario School Survey (AOSS). Longitudinal data comparisons are based on the data collected from the elementary and secondary schools that participated in People for Education’s 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2021-22 AOSS. Unless cited from other sources, the statistics and quoted material in this report originate from People for Education’s 2022-23 AOSS, the 26th annual survey of elementary schools, and the 23rd annual survey of secondary schools in Ontario. Surveys from the 2022-23 AOSS were completed online via SurveyMonkey in both English and French in the fall of 2022. Survey responses were disaggregated to examine survey representation across provincial regions (see table below). Schools were sorted into geographical regions based on the first letter of their postal code. The GTA region includes schools with M postal codes as well as those with L postal codes located in GTA municipalities.²²

Region (by postal code)	Percentage of schools in sample	Percentage of schools in province
Northern (P)	18%	11%
Central (L exclud. GTA)	9%	11%
Eastern (K)	18%	18%
Southwestern (N)	23%	20%
GTA	33%	40%

Figure 11: Survey response representation by region, all schools, 2022-2023

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using inductive analysis. Researchers read responses and coded emergent themes in each set of data (i.e., the responses to each of the survey’s open-ended questions). The quantitative analyses in this report are based on descriptive statistics. The primary objective of the descriptive analyses is to present numerical information in a format that is accessible to a broad public readership. All data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software. All calculations have been rounded to the nearest whole number and may not total 100% in displays of disaggregated categories. All survey responses and data are kept confidential and stored in conjunction with TriCouncil recommendations for the safeguarding of data.

People for Education acknowledges the absence of Indigenous research methodologies in this report, specifically the missing perspectives and lived experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. Building partnerships and working in collaboration with Indigenous communities is an area of improvement where our organization is committed to growing in the future.

For questions about the methodology used in this report, please contact the research team at People for Education: info@peopleforeducation.ca.

Endnotes

- 1 Yellowhead Institute. 2022. “Calls to Action Accountability: A 2022 Status Update on Reconciliation.” Accessed February 22, 2023. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/TRC-Report-12.15.2022-Yellowhead-Institute-min.pdf>
- 2 Ontario Ministry of Education. 2018. “Strengthening Our Learning Journey Third Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework.” Accessed March 3, 2023. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-ieo-third-progress-report-en-2021-10-28.pdf>, p. 19, citing preliminary OnSIS enrollment data for October 2015.
- 3 Watters, Haydn. 2015. “Truth and Reconciliation chair urges Canada to adopt UN declaration on Indigenous Peoples.” CBC News, June 1, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/truth-and-reconciliation-chair-urges-canada-to-adopt-un-declaration-on-indigenous-peoples-1.3096225>
- 4 Ontario Ministry of Education. 2007. “Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework.” Accessed March 17, 2023. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-ontario-first-nation-metis-inuit-education-policy-framework-2007-en-2021-10-29.pdf>; Ontario Ministry of Education. 2007. “Building Bridges to Success for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students.” Accessed April 4, 2023. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-building-bridges-to-success-first-nation-metis-inuit-students-en-2021-10-21.pdf>
- 5 Government of Ontario. 2016. “The Journey Together: Ontario’s Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.” Accessed February 23, 2023. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/journey-together-ontarios-commitment-reconciliation-indigenous-peoples>
- 6 Johnson, Rhiannon. Nov 8, 2017. “Indigenous history, culture now mandatory part of Ontario curriculum”. CBC News. Accessed March 9, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/indigenous-history-culture-mandatory-ontario-curriculum-1.4393527>
- 7 Government of Ontario. 2021. “Indigenous education in Ontario.” Accessed February 22, 2023. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/indigenous-education-ontario>
- 8 Government of Ontario. 2021. “Ontario to Strengthen Mandatory Indigenous Learning in School Curriculum.” September 29, 2021. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000904/ontario-to-strengthen-mandatory-indigenous-learning-in-school-curriculum>
- 9 McInnes, Angela. 2022. “Ontario science and tech curriculum shifts focus from Indigenous framework to economy, educators say.” CBC News, July 23, 2022. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/ontario-science-and-tech-curriculum-shifts-focus-from-indigenous-framework-to-economy-educators-say-1.6527820>
- 10 Alphonso, Caroline. 2022. “Indigenous science framework removed from Ontario elementary school curriculum.” The Globe and Mail, July 2, 2022. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-indigenous-science-framework-removed-from-ontario-elementary-school>
- 11 People for Education. 2022. “30 years with insufficient progress on child well-being.” Accessed April 4, 2023. <https://peopleforeducation.ca/our-work/30-years-with-insufficient-progress-on-child-well-being>
- 12 Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General. 2020. “Annual progress report 2020: Ontario’s Anti-Racism Strategic Plan.” Accessed April 4, 2023. <https://files.ontario.ca/solgen-annual-progress-report-2020-anti-racism-strategic-plan-en-2020-09-20-v2.pdf>
- 13 Ontario Ministry of Education. 2022. “Education Funding: Technical Paper 2022–23.” Accessed April 4, 2023. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-2022-23-technical-paper-en-2022-03-15.pdf>
- 14 Toronto District School Board. 2023. “TDSB Approves Mandatory Indigenous Education in Grade 11.” February 1, 2023. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Home/ctl/Details/mid/42863/itemId/66>
- 15 Ontario Ministry of Education. 2019. “The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies.” Accessed February 23, 2023. <https://assets-us-01.kc-usercontent.com/fbd574c4-da36-0066-a0c5-849ffb2de96e/e5733b4c-80ae-4988-8ab4-d29ae1cbaae2/First-nations-metis-inuit-studies-grades-9-12.pdf>

- 16 Halton District School Board. 2021. "Student Voices Student Experiences of Racism & HDSB's Strengthened Commitments to Anti-Racism." Accessed March 1, 2023. <https://www.hdsb.ca/our-board/Documents/Student-Voices-HDSB-Response-to-Racism.pdf#search=NBE>; Waterloo Region District School Board. 2022. "Director's Response Strategic Plan." Accessed March 8, 2023. <https://www.wrdsb.ca/learning/strategic-plan/directors-response/>
- 17 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action." Accessed February 22, 2023. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
- 18 Ontario Ministry of Education. 2017. "Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan." Accessed March 3, 2023. https://files.ontario.ca/edu-1_0/edu-Ontario-Education-Equity-Action-Plan-en-2021-08-04.pdf
- 19 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action." Accessed February 22, 2023. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
- 20 Statistics Canada. 2022. "Indigenous population continues to grow and is much younger than the non-Indigenous population, although the pace of growth has slowed." September 21, 2022. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm>
- 21 Ontario Ministry of Education. 2007. "Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework." Accessed March 17, 2023. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-ontario-first-nation-metis-inuit-education-policy-framework-2007-en-2021-10-29.pdf>
- 22 City of Toronto. n.d. "City Halls - GTA Municipalities and Municipalities Outside of the GTA." Accessed February 28, 2022. <https://www.toronto.ca/home/311-toronto-at-your-service/find-service-information/article/?kb=kA06g000001cvbdCAA>

Bibliography

- Alphonso, Caroline. 2022. "Indigenous science framework removed from Ontario elementary school curriculum." The Globe and Mail, July 2, 2022. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-indigenous-science-framework-removed-from-ontario-elementary-school/>
- City of Toronto. n.d. "City Halls - GTA Municipalities and Municipalities Outside of the GTA." Accessed February 28, 2022. <https://www.toronto.ca/home/311-toronto-at-your-service/find-service-information/article/?kb=kA06g000001cvbdCAA>
- Government of Ontario. 2016. "The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples." Accessed February 23, 2023. https://files.ontario.ca/trc_report_web_mar17_en_1.pdf
- Government of Ontario. 2021. "Indigenous education in Ontario." Accessed February 22, 2023. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/indigenous-education-ontario>
- Government of Ontario. 2021. "Ontario to Strengthen Mandatory Indigenous Learning in School Curriculum." September 29, 2021. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000904/ontario-to-strengthen-mandatory-indigenous-learning-in-school-curriculum>
- Halton District School Board. 2021. "Student Voices Student Experiences of Racism & HDSB's Strengthened Commitments to Anti-Racism." Accessed March 1, 2023. <https://www.hdsb.ca/our-board/Documents/Student-Voices-HDSB-Response-to-Racism.pdf#search=NBE>
- Johnson, Rhiannon. 2017. "Indigenous history, culture now mandatory part of Ontario curriculum". CBC News, Nov 8, 2017. Accessed March 9, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/indigenous-history-culture-mandatory-ontario-curriculum-1.4393527>
- McInnes, Angela. 2022. "Ontario science and tech curriculum shifts focus from Indigenous framework to economy, educators say." CBC News, July 23, 2022. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/ontario-science-and-tech-curriculum-shifts-focus-from-indigenous-framework-to-economy-educators-say-1.6527820>
- Ontario Ministry of Education. 2007. "Building Bridges to Success for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students." Accessed April 4, 2023. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-building-bridges-to-success-first-nation-metis-inuit-students-en-2021-10-21.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Education. 2007. "Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework." Accessed March 17, 2023. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-ontario-first-nation-metis-inuit-education-policy-framework-2007-en-2021-10-29.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Education. 2017. "Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan." Accessed March 3, 2023. https://files.ontario.ca/edu-1_0/edu-Ontario-Education-Equity-Action-Plan-en-2021-08-04.pdf
- Ontario Ministry of Education. 2018. "Strengthening Our Learning Journey Third Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework." Accessed March 3, 2023. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-ieo-third-progress-report-en-2021-10-28.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Education. 2019. "The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies." Accessed February 23, 2023. <https://assets-us-01.kc-usercontent.com/fbd574c4-da36-0066-a0c5-849ffb2de96e/e5733b4c-80ae-4988-8ab4-d29ae1cbaae2/First-nations-metis-inuit-studies-grades-9-12.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Education. 2022. "Education Funding: Technical Paper 2022–23." Accessed April 4, 2023. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-2022-23-technical-paper-en-2022-03-15.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General. 2020. "Annual progress report 2020: Ontario's Anti-Racism Strategic Plan." Accessed April 4, 2023. <https://files.ontario.ca/solgen-annual-progress-report-2020-anti-racism-strategic-plan-en-2020-09-20-v2.pdf>
- People for Education. 2022. "30 years with insufficient progress on child well-being." Accessed April 4, 2023. <https://peopleforeducation.ca/our-work/30-years-with-insufficient-progress-on-child-well-being/>

- Statistics Canada. 2022. "Indigenous population continues to grow and is much younger than the non-Indigenous population, although the pace of growth has slowed." September 21, 2022. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.html>
- Toronto District School Board. 2023. "TDSB Approves Mandatory Indigenous Education in Grade 11." February 1, 2023. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Home/ctl/Details/mid/42863/itemId/66>
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action." Accessed February 22, 2023. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf
- Waterloo Region District School Board. 2022. "Director's Response Strategic Plan." Accessed March 8, 2023. <https://www.wrdsb.ca/learning/strategic-plan/directors-response/>
- Watters, Haydn. 2015. "Truth and Reconciliation chair urges Canada to adopt UN declaration on Indigenous Peoples." CBC News, June 1, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/truth-and-reconciliation-chair-urges-canada-to-adopt-un-declaration-on-indigenous-peoples-1.3096225>
- Yellowhead Institute. 2022. "Calls to Action Accountability: A 2022 Status Update on Reconciliation." Accessed February 22, 2023. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/TRC-Report-12.15.2022-Yellowhead-Institute-min.pdf>

© People for Education, 2023

People for Education is an independent, non-partisan, charitable organization working to support and advance public education through research, policy, and public engagement.

Charitable No. 85719 0532 RR000

www.peopleforeducation.ca | info@peopleforeducation.ca

