

What Is the Best Way to Indigenize Teaching Practices?

With the publication of the final report of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Canada must now look at changing practices in various fields, including education. The Canadian Council on Learning worked with First Nations, Métis and Inuit to build a new framework for understanding how Indigenous Peoples define the concept of learning. Many researchers have thus recognized the importance of holistic learning for engaging Indigenous students.

To this end, here are several suggestions for integrating Indigenous teaching practices into Canadian schools:

1. Adapt initial teacher training to the pedagogical needs of Indigenous students

- **Train more Indigenous teachers** as they are key participants in the indigenization of teaching practices and can better respond to the territorial, socioeconomic and familial realities of First Peoples. In addition, they are models of academic perseverance and success.
- **Develop and implement university courses on Indigenous educational practices** that would be offered at all levels of teacher training, in relation to a variety of subjects (history of Indigenous education, language instruction, etc.). These courses will help participants, particularly future non-Indigenous teachers, redefine certain concepts (learning, literacy, etc.) and learn practices to indigenize their teaching.

2. Create a stronger Indigenous presence in schools by implementing holistic, community-based teaching practices

- **Invite elders to visit classes** in history, geography, and ethics and religious culture, and contact a community organization working with First Nations to find guest speakers.
- **Connect Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in networks**, using multimedia platforms like the Remote Networked Schools initiative.
- **Incorporate holistic practices** such as learning about the land and oneself and maintaining ties with elders, traditions, traditional ceremonies and the community as a whole.
- **Create connections between learning and the students' life experiences** using observation and experimentation.
- **Incorporate the cultures, languages and oral histories of Indigenous Peoples**, including teaching and learning practices specific to them (traditional ceremonies, narratives, stories, place names, medicinal plants, sports, arts, etc.).

3. Deconstruct the false representations about First Peoples

- **Working with the students, critically analyze teaching materials** and identify the potential stereotypes and generalizations found in teaching materials. This could be done by conducting a content analysis of children's literature where the teacher suggests comparing books about First Nations written by Indigenous authors with those written by non-Indigenous authors.

To encourage the engagement of Indigenous students, teaching practices must integrate a curriculum that is culturally relevant to them, approved by Canadian First Nations peoples and based on international standards.

For online resources as well as the research references that inform this issue, please visit:

www.cea-ace.ca/facts-on-education

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