ABORIGINAL EDUCATION
The CPCO office will be closed for the Christmas holidays, commencing Monday, December 21, 2015, and will reopen on Monday, January 4, 2016. Voice and email messages received over the holidays will be returned on January 4, 2016.

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"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

Luke 2:10

May the Lord bless you this Christmas and always.

Catholic Principals’ Council | Ontario

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We are always looking for interesting articles. Submissions should be 800-1000 words. Images should be 300 dpi minimum and in jpg, tif, or png formats. Please do not reduce the size of digital images.

Send the articles in Word format only to Editor, Deirdre Kinsella Biss at dkinsellabiss@cpco.on.ca

Upcoming themes and deadlines:

**SUMMER 2016 - Transformative Education**
Articles due by April 8, 2016

CPCO reserves the right to edit all materials. Please understand that a submission does not automatically guarantee publication.
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Aboriginal Education
Cover design by Ania Czupajlo

As principals and vice-principals, we embrace the diversity and uniqueness that exist in our schools. Our Catholic schools should be a place of welcome, a place of respect and caring, and a place of acceptance and friendship.

Our call is to ensure that the needs of all our learners, including Aboriginal students, are being met through the education we deliver and the inclusive environment we create.
Exploring Math through Indigenous Culture

Christina enters the Grade 3 classroom and sits on a low stool in front of a group of cross-legged students. She opens up a small box and, smiling at the children, hands out some bead bracelets for them to look at. “So, loomwork is done with glass and sometimes plastic beads. A very long time ago this kind of work was done with the sinew from animals – that’s the muscles from animals’ legs – you dry it up and it would make thread. And then beads were made from shells, and porcupine quills and all kind of things that you’d find in nature. And then after that, when people started trading for glass beads, we started using glass beads, and then plastic beads.” Christina then shows the students a loom with some beadwork on it.

This is the beginning of a Grade 3 mathematics unit, focusing on multiplicative thinking, and algebraic and proportional reasoning. Christina is a member of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation and is the Operations Manager of their cultural centre. She is also an expert loomer. She and the classroom teacher Anne are part of a larger research project investigating the connections between Indigenous cultural practices and the Western mathematics found in the Ontario mathematics curriculum.

Ministries of Education across Canada have recognized the need to explicitly incorporate Indigenous content to support identity building and appreciation of Indigenous perspectives and values. This project was developed to explore how to co-design and co-teach units of instruction that are culturally responsive and conform to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Standards and practices.

Research has shown that creating connections between math instruction and Indigenous culture has had beneficial effects on students’ abilities to learn mathematics (Cajete, 1994; Lipka, 1994). Long-term studies by Lipka (2002, 2007), Brenner (1998) and Doherty et al. (2002) found that culturally responsive education in mathematics had statistically significant results in terms of student achievement. Reform-based mathematical instructional practices are aligned with many aspects of Indigenous teaching in that both emphasize experiential learning, modelling, collaborative activity and teaching for meaning over rote memorization and algorithm efficiency.

One of the most important components of this project has been placing Indigenous cultural practices at the heart of an inquiry-based approach to teaching mathematics. Four research teams, made up of Indigenous educators and artists and non-Native educators, have explored the powerful mathematical thinking that emerges when First Nations community members are invited to co-create and co-deliver units of instruction.
FOSTERING INDIGENOUS INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

Integrating Indigenous teachings and values into the school community is a challenge that principals and vice-principals are entrusted with today. This comprehensive task is one that is framed within the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007); however, the implementation of this framework in provincial schools is varied in its results.

School leaders are the day-to-day champions of inspiring and facilitating transformational change. Principals and vice-principals have the unique opportunity to foster a school culture that honours Indigenous peoples and their worldviews. So, how can this be done? What are the strategies, factors and resources that contribute to a school that is First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) inclusive?

This article explores the challenge through key questions (with suggestions for change) in the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual domains.

THE PHYSICAL

The physical domain refers to the spaces (walls, architecture, signage, outdoor areas, branding) that your school represents and occupies. It goes beyond bricks and mortar and responds to the presence that your school emits. Questions that focus on the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in these spaces are:

- Does the school environment reflect FNMI culture? Take a concrete look at the entry, library, bulletin boards, cafeteria, gymnasium, offices and other rooms.
- Is there language that reflects the FNMI communities in your area? Have you identified the Nation – the FNMI community – that the school community resides upon? Every school in Ontario is built on Indigenous lands or treaty territories. Acknowledging the territory upon which the school is built is fundamental to respectful leadership.
- Are there Indigenous symbols or teachings visible for students and staff? Once you have done this inventory, it is critical to do a member check. This means working with your FNMI Lead, FNMI education counsellor or respective Indigenous organization to assess the quality of these spatial messages.

THE EMOTIONAL

The emotional domain refers to authentic connections made with the FNMI community. It is further described as the concrete and co-developed strategies for FNMI community engagement. Questions to reflect on and further research are:

- Is there a parental/guardian engagement plan in place that focuses on FNMI families? Are there linkages in this plan made with various agencies to support FNMI families?
- Do you have connections to FNMI groups and resources that are available in the area? Fostering these connections will be critical to your linking FNMI students, families and teachers/staff with appropriate services and knowledge keepers.
- Do you know who your FNMI students are? What about their familial status? Many FNMI families include extended members that are highly involved in child rearing. Accessing this information may be as easy as examining the nominal roll through existing tuition agreements with First Nation communities, or through information acquired in a board-wide planned FNMI self-identification strategy, or (the most sustainable) your connections with FNMI human resources.
SHARING CULTURES
SHAPING FUTURES

St. Marguerite d’Youville bridges schools of the North with schools of the South

A student/teacher excursion to Iqaluit, Nunavut, is just one of the many ways St. Marguerite d’Youville Catholic Secondary School is working toward building a bridge and meeting the goals outlined in the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework, 2007.

This framework and the Ontario Indigenous Education Strategy state that the ministry, boards and schools must work together to improve the academic achievement of Indigenous students and close the gap in academic achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners. The ministry has identified a number of overriding issues affecting Indigenous student achievement. St Marguerite d’Youville Catholic Secondary School is attempting to address the issue that there is a lack of understanding within schools and school boards of First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories and perspectives.

Our school has engaged in many approaches to foster greater understandings. These include staff professional development, First Nations, Métis, Inuit Studies course offerings, school-wide presentations, classroom workshops, enhanced resources for our library, incorporating Indigenous education into our Alternative Education Program and, most recently, a nine-day student excursion to Iqaluit, Nunavut with Archbishop Romero Catholic Secondary School.

With extensive support at the system level and through collaboration with the Dufferin-Peel CDSB Program Department we were able to “facilitate professional development opportunities for teaching staff to assist them in incorporating culturally appropriate pedagogy into practice to support Aboriginal student achievement, well-being and success” and “identify opportunities for the sharing of promising practices and culturally appropriate/responsive resources to better meet the learning needs of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students” as outlined in the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework Implementation Plan 2014.

THE IQALUIT EXCURSION

The Iqaluit excursion is an extension of our learning and our vision to build awareness and understanding of the complexities of Inuit culture and history and to begin to provide a curriculum that facilitates learning about all Canada’s First Peoples. The intent is also to help develop community partnerships and implement strategies that facilitate increased participation by First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities in Catholic school curriculum.

During their time in Nunavut, our students had opportunities to dialogue with Inuit Elders, explore the vast and beautiful northern landscape, and sample traditional country food including arctic char, ptarmigan, beluga, polar bear, caribou and bannock. They also spent time with the Inuit community. Here they were able to learn about amauti, sing and drum with Inuit throat-singers, listen to traditional story-telling, build igloos, practise Arctic Winter Games and make traditional tools such as ulus. Our students heard first-hand from experienced hunters about the traditional
Many of the world’s religions and cultures refer to the symbol and metaphor of the circle to depict and explain inclusivity and equality. In our Catholic tradition, circles are inferred in many faith-based concepts. Christ is worshiped as the Alpha and Omega, meaning He is the first and the last, the beginning and the end of all creation. Our liturgical year follows a cyclical pattern including the liturgical seasons of Ordinary time, Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. The most revered of our beliefs, the Resurrection cycle and Paschal Mystery connect to the cycle of dying and rising above our earthly sufferings.

Since the beginning of man, the human experience of reality and mystery has been linked to the symbol of the circle. The directions on a compass, the positioning of the sun, the progression of the seasons, the relationship between the elements of life, the earth, sun, water, and air, the journey from life to death, all follow cyclical patterns. The circle itself is a metaphor used to describe all aspects of life and a person’s unique and yet interconnected role within God’s creation of the universe.

Without beginning or end, circles commonly represent unity, wholeness and infinity. Circles are often seen as protective symbols. For example, standing within a circle can shield a person from dangers or influences from the outside. The circle itself signifies inclusion, safety and belonging.
WHERE DO YOU START A MORE THAN 500-YEAR-OLD STORY TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY IN A CATHOLIC SETTING?

As school leaders we have a moral imperative to establish tangible steps to create an inclusive educational community where the narrative can be heard and shared in a safe and respectful forum. The narrative of Canada’s Indigenous peoples is one of a history of cultural and physical abuse. This narrative begins with the Royal Proclamation of 1493 by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain. Pope Alexander, through the Doctrine of Discovery, decrees that non-Christian nations may no longer own land in the face of claims made by Christian sovereigns. In effect, Indigenous people were placed under the guardianship of Christian nations. Next is the 1867 British North America Act and the 1876 Indian Act, which further confirmed that Canada’s Indigenous people were under the direct control of the Canadian Federal Government.

Through the Indian Act, the government denied Indigenous peoples the basic rights that most Canadians take for granted. This was followed by the federal government’s removal of Indigenous children from their communities from 1820 to the 1970s. Indigenous children were placed in church-run boarding schools far from their home communities. In these schools children endured emotional, physical and sexual abuse, which has left lasting impacts on Indigenous communities and culture. The last residential school in Canada closed in 1996.

As Catholic educators, we must be mindful of the past as we educate our students in learning about the narrative of our country’s Indigenous peoples and how as Canadians we can move forward. Engagement of students, parents and staff of First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) background requires us to be conscious of the history and legacy of Canada’s Indigenous peoples. The pedagogy must be respectful of the traditions, culture and spirituality of Indigenous peoples.

The following 10 steps provide examples of how the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) began this conversation, and how the board has set the direction for acknowledging the narrative of our FNMI students and sharing of the story of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Central to this is the building of relationships and connections with the FNMI community to help provide schools with the necessary resources to engage Catholic school communities in meaningful learning experiences.
BEING AN ABORIGINAL PERSON AND EDUCATOR living here in Canada on the heels of the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report in the summer of 2015, there is much to be hopeful for in spite of the work we – all Canadians – still need to do.

One of the reasons or excuses why some Canadians will not begin this work is their lack of connection to Indigenous peoples in real measurable ways. However, the issues and problems faced by Indigenous peoples are a barometer of so much more. And it won’t take long before all Canadians will begin to see and face many of these same problems and issues close to home.

If you wish to know what is going to happen to the rest of Canadians, it already happened to Indigenous peoples.

For instance, one of the fastest growing health concerns among adult Canadians is diabetes, which has been in the Indigenous community since contact. A major health concern among young Canadians is youth obesity, which has been epidemic in Indigenous communities since traditional lifestyles were replaced by Western food systems.

We do not need to look far to see how many other segments of the Canadian population are now experiencing what Indigenous peoples have lived with for centuries.

Education is one of these areas.

In 2015, schools across the country celebrated National Aboriginal Day on June 21st with events, activities, visits from Elders and the retelling of classical Aboriginal myths. When classes resumed in September, six weeks after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, they came back to a different Canada.

Canada today is now familiar with a dark part of our shared history, of which most Canadians were not aware. Aside from the attempts of cultural genocide through the residential school system, troubling news released by Statistics Canada just 14 years ago, indicates that there has been little to no change for our Aboriginal people. When the number of Aboriginals aged 15 or older not attending school is 83.69 per cent, a fundamental problem exists. Statistics on Aboriginal people over the past 40 years show that the Western school system does not work for the majority of Aboriginals. A Profile of Disability in Canada, 2001

I have been among the thousands of Aboriginals who have received the identification of learning disabled. The number of both Aboriginal and mainstream non-Aboriginal children, who are being labelled and who are falling through the cracks has increased drastically. Today, school systems and governments are scrambling to find solutions, which often ignore that the root of the problem may be within the system itself. These problems can be seen in the “how” of their pedagogy. Stimulating Concentration A Profile of Disability

The education system, in of itself, needs to be more reflective of the non-European students in the classroom. By being more inclusive in both the ‘what: content’ and the ‘how: pedagogy,’ we will be more equipped in meeting the growing needs of Canada’s educational system.
NATIVE SPIRITUALITY AND CATHOLIC PRAXIS
A shared understanding

St. John Paul II in speaking to the Native Peoples of the Americas affirmed that they knew God the Creator long before Christian missionaries came to the Americas.

“I was able to see you as the noble descendants of countless generations of inhabitants of this land, whose ways were marked by great respect for the natural resources of land and rivers, of forest and plain and desert. Here your forefathers cherished and sought to pass on to each new generation their customs and traditions, their history and way of life. Here they worshipped the Creator and thanked him for his gifts.”

The address was to all Native Peoples including our First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

We share much spiritual ground in the teachings and values of both our Aboriginal and Catholic traditions. First Nations, Métis and Inuit hold the Seven Grandfather Teachings as their spiritual foundation.

1. Wisdom
2. Love
3. Respect
4. Bravery
5. Honesty
6. Humility
7. Truth

All other feelings, thoughts and actions are a combination of anywhere from one to all seven teachings together. Living a good life and serving the people is not done dishonestly, disrespectfully, carelessly, haphazardly or cavalierly [arrogance].” George Martin.²

We see in Paul’s letter to the Galatians’ similar virtues identified as the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Students receiving the sacrament of confirmation hear the words, “Send them the gift of wisdom and understanding, right judgement and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of wisdom and awe in your presence.” Both traditions value good character and moral formation rooted in wisdom, love and service for the common good of people and creation.

To help expand some of these teachings, Gerard Sagassige shares his experience. Raised Catholic by his grandmother and in the tradition of the Anishinaabe by his grandfather, Gerard is an Aboriginal Spirit Advisor.

“Beginning with the creation story, the Anishinaabeg were placed here on earth by the Creator “from whence we were lowered.” We were created to live forever in all of life’s dimensions: spiritual, physical, mental and emotional. The Creator’s walk and path in life teaches us to physically respect the balance of humans and all created things on this earth.”

“The earth is our Mother. She provides everything we need for living: water, food, medicines, shelter, clothing. We take only what we need to survive to respect the harmony of the Creator. The beings of our grandmother’s moon and our grandfather’s sun showcase the balance and the commitment instructions of the Creator to watch over the earth mother and her relatives as she nurtures our gifts.”

The wisdom of this teaching is highlighted by Pope Francis’s historic encyclical “Laudato Si’ - On Care for Our Common Home. This is the first encyclical written to directly address concern and care for the environment as it impacts not only humans but also all of creation.

“The environment, in the pope’s use of the word, is not something out there: nature as opposed to the human world. The term describes the relationship between nature and humans, who are inextricably linked and part of each other. It is that relationship that must be set right.”

“Our spiritual journey is a journey of trust and belief entailing spiritual vows and prayers led by spiritual leaders who are the keepers, sharing a similar role as clergy.”

Paul Tratnyek, Faith Animator, Brant Haldimand Norfolk CDSB
Elder Gerard Sagassige

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This teacher did not want my three good ideas; she wanted three tasks, three tricks, three lesson plans. She wanted three simple things she could do to check off the box to say that it had been done, she had infused Indigenous knowledge in her math class, and now she could return to her normal way of teaching. But such add-on approaches do little to transform our classrooms into places of greater equity and inclusiveness for Indigenous learners and often have the opposite effect of trivializing Indigenous knowledges and cultures.

I have frequently been asked, often by well-intentioned individuals, for ideas about how to support their Indigenous students. While the request to do a better job for Indigenous learners is laudable, the problematic aspect of these requests is that such requests have a built-in underlying assumption that somehow all Indigenous learners are the same, right across the country.

The idea that there are specific ways to teach Aboriginal children is sustained by research designed to identify learning styles of Aboriginal children. This work has been popular in the past 30+ years (Pewewardy, 2002), yet it is has also been critiqued as being over-generalized resulting in a simplistic belief that a one-size-fits-all approach exists. Battiste (2002) cautioned educators and researchers to avoid such over-generalizations, claiming that:

Aboriginal children [are] diverse learners. They do not have a single homogenous learning style as generalized in some teaching literature from the 1970s and 1980s. Teachers need to recognize that they must use a variety of styles of participation and information exchanges, adapt their teaching methods to the Indigenous styles of learning that exist, and avoid over-generalizing Aboriginal students’ capabilities based on generalized perceived cultural differences. (p.16)

While, in my own research, it has been helpful to understand and explore some of the preferred ways of learning of Mi’kmaw children, it has also been important to maintain a critical approach acknowledging the risk of over-generalizations that can lead to misconceptions that may in fact do more harm than good. There is as much diversity of learning styles within a Mi’kmaw class as there is in any class, so there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. Likewise there is similar diversity within and across all Indigenous communities.

When I was asked to write an article that would help school leaders understand “the Indigenous Learner” I knew it would be important to write about these three good ideas.

**KNOW YOUR KIDS**

We need to get to know our students. But what does this really mean?

In our schools, all children are unique, have their own interests, talents, and dreams for their future. Our job as educators is to help them become who they are meant to be. We need to take the time to get to know our students on an individual level and not as a representative of their race or cultural group.
Although in the last 10 years our provincial school system as a whole has moved towards cultural inclusion and an increased understanding of our country’s first peoples, we have only just begun our journey together. When truly understanding the needs of Aboriginal youth, we have to go back to the effects of the residential school system and what losing your culture, your spirituality and your traditional teachings do to you.

Being that the last residential school closed in the late 1990s, we are still feeling the effects of that era in our children today. It is when we embrace the Seven Grandfather Teachings: wisdom, love, bravery, honesty, humility, respect and truth that we better understand our people and their vast and diverse histories. When we teach traditional teachings in our schools, we are open to understanding the teachings and then living them. It is a process and a journey for all peoples. Change and understanding doesn’t happen in a short period of time.

Change takes time and the building of intercultural relationships is at the core of this change. Utilizing the smudge ceremony, the pipe ceremony and the sweat lodge ceremony promotes healing for all people, not just First Nation people, but all people. Ceremonies reconnect all people to the land, to the animals, to the water, to the air and to the fire.
The First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry Initiative

The First Nation, Métis and Inuit Collaborative Inquiry Initiative (FNMI CI) started in the fall of 2013 with 15 school boards, expanded to include 22 boards in the 2014-2015 school year, and is now in its third year with 44 participating boards.

This initiative aims to: engage members of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) community, support the success of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students, and increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives for all staff and students.

The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (LNS) Student Achievement Division, in partnership with the Aboriginal Education Office of the Ontario Ministry of Education, provides direction and support to participating District School Boards (DSBs). Inquiry designs are grounded in local contexts, CI teams are established, and local community partners are invited to participate. Each participating DSB identifies a Board Lead and schools to participate in the initiative. Working in collaboration, educators and community members compose inquiry questions to guide their work.

This Collaborative Inquiry has tried to provide a framework for the school and community to come together to build a strong and sustainable relationship. The relationship is key to moving forward. (p.15)

Collaboration between School Board staff and FNMI community members to design inquiries reflecting students’ capacities and needs is proving to be a key factor in this initiative’s success. Whether boards choose to focus on oral language development in the primary division, the acquisition of math concepts in the junior division, or credit recovery in secondary schools collaboration with community members makes the difference.

Active participation by DSBs in cultivating relationships sent a strong message to the community that school boards and the ministry were serious about needing and wanting input from the community. Community members were accustomed to being asked for their help in solving problems, but this CI was different. In this case, community members were positioned as legitimate and expert partners in a long-term project aimed at initiating systemic change.
Students from St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School in Brampton, took part in a mural project involving critically acclaimed Métis artist Christi Belcourt and traditional Anishinaabe Storyteller Isaac Murdoch from Serpent River First Nation.

The project was inspired by Anishinaabemowin: using Indigenous Knowledge for the future. Through the traditional Anishinaabe Fisher Story, students and teachers learned about the importance of Indigenous Knowledge, and how that understanding can provide insight and answers to many of today’s issues that pertain to environmental sustainability, contributing factors to climate change, destruction of the earth, and the role students can take to become active in creating positive change.

Throughout this weeklong project, more than 100 students from a variety of different classes had the opportunity to meet numerous First Nations community members. Our First Nations guests contributed their time through ceremony and shared their personal stories about the impacts of residential schooling and missing and murdered Indigenous women, as well as the inspiring resilience of their communities.

Our students, staff, ministry and school board representatives and community members were deeply moved and inspired to continue to work towards bringing awareness and education to all.

**Teachers Resource Kit**

Realizing the impact this experience had on our students, community and beyond, as well as recognizing the need for authentic Indigenous resources, teachers Jodie Williams and Geordi Barnett were inspired to produce a teachers resource kit called *Lessons From the Earth: Storytelling, Art & Indigenous Knowledge.*
IT IS DIFFICULT TO VIEW THIS SCHOOL BOARD AS HAVING BORDERS, unfolding as it does over a thousand twisting kilometres of highway and brushing the boundaries of more than 10 First Nation communities. And yet, there are indeed borders – ideological, geographical, cultural, pedagogical and technological – and we have intentionally crossed them this year. We did so eagerly and hesitantly, at times clumsily.

If you have lived your entire life in an urban centre, it might be challenging to fathom growing up in a community where the English Catholic high school closest to you is a one, two, three, or even four-hour car ride away from your home. Such is the reality in our board’s smaller communities – Blind River, Chapleau, Elliot Lake, Espanola, Hornepayne, Massey, Wawa, White River – where Catholic education essentially ends at Grade 8, simply because of geography. Once these elementary students graduate, the majority of them move on to attend a public high school in or near their home towns.

This year, we dared to cross a border that extended students’ Catholic education. We created and offered a virtual Grade 9 Religion course that integrated First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) traditions, perspectives and teachings.

As border crossings go, it was not spectacular. There were no flashing lights or visits from important officials. By outward appearances, only one teacher and seven adventurous students, half of them from a neighbouring Catholic board, traversed that invisible line. These dedicated pioneers – some FNMI and some non-FNMI – met online two hours a night, two nights a week, from November to April. During that time, they learned in a virtual classroom in Adobe Connect, an online web conferencing system that allows for the use of web cams, microphones, file exchanges, electronic polls, screen sharing, text chat, break-out rooms, live collaboration, presentations, videos and instant feedback. Students interacted with each other and their teacher in real time and submitted many of their assignments via the board’s learning management system (LMS). They even visited a virtual chapel.

Yes, on the surface, eight people crossed a border. But outward appearances can be deceiving. In the background, many helped pave the way for the few. Armed with the knowledge that FNMI students do not typically achieve at the same level as non-FNMI students and the suspicion that FNMI students might not see themselves in the religion curriculum as currently delivered, a dedicated group of educators sought to produce innovative course materials. Funding from the Ministry of Education and the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers’ Association (OCSOA) allowed four secondary religion teachers to be released temporarily from other duties. These teachers collaborated closely with the board’s Faith Animator, FNMI Special Assignment Teacher, e-Learning Contact and Curriculum Coordinator, who provided feedback and expertise on theology, technology, assessment and FNMI traditions.

If they weren’t previously aware of the strong connections between Catholicism and FNMI traditions, the teachers soon learned. For example, they incorporated such parallels into the materials they created:
What happens when you bring students together from across the city, give them paint, cultural teaching, and artistic freedom? Powerful Indigenous themed banners that tell a story not just of Native culture, but also of how students who were once strangers become part of a circle of harmony and creativity. The product of this initiative has been admired regularly over the last year by many who pass through a main corridor at the school board’s offices.
EDUCATION AS RECONCILIATION

Using the Medicine Wheel

For more than a century, until the late 1990s, the Canadian government, in partnership with Christian churches, operated a residential school system for more than 150,000 First Nation, Métis and Inuit children. The residential school system was designed to assimilate the First Peoples of Canada into mainstream society by “eliminating parental and community involvement in the intellectual, cultural and spiritual development of Aboriginal children.”

The intergenerational impacts of the assimilation process have been transmitted to the children in our schools today, and the time has come for all sectors of society, including education, to redress the legacy of residential schools, advance the process of Canadian reconciliation, and answer the calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (2007) included the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada with the vision statement: “We will reveal the truth about residential schools, and establish a renewed sense of Canada that is inclusive and respectful, and that enables reconciliation.”

The Commission believes that “there can be no movement toward reconciliation without an understanding of the rationale, operation and overall impact of the schools. Through its work, the Commission has concluded that ... Canadians have been denied a full and proper education as to the nature of Aboriginal societies, and the history of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.”

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report and calls to action across 22 sections with 94 recommendations to further its vision of repairing relationships in Canadian society.

Calls to Education

Calls 62 to 64 address education for reconciliation.

62. We call upon the federal, provincial and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with survivors, Aboriginal peoples and educators to:

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 12 students.

63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues including:

i. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade 12 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.

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.

These recommendations must now be aligned with the work of The Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007)’s goals of high level of student achievement, reduce gaps in student achievement, and high levels of public confidence.

Teachings of the Medicine Wheel

Teachings of the Medicine Wheel can frame the role of education in the reconciliation process. In many Indigenous cultures, the Medicine Wheel’ metaphor contains all of the traditional teachings and can therefore be used as a guide on any journey, including the reconciliation process. While there is some variation in its teachings and representations, the underlying web of meaning to Medicine Wheels remains the same: the importance of appreciating and respecting the ongoing interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all things.

The wheel drawing simply begins by making a circle. Superimposed on this circle are four equidistant points. These points symbolically identify the power/medicine of the four directions (east, south, west, north) using four different colours. The final drawing resembles a compass for human understanding.
Meet 2016 Keynote Speakers:

**Father Thomas J. Reese**

Father Thomas J. Reese is a Jesuit Priest and senior analyst for the *National Catholic Reporter*. His writing for the *Reporter* includes a weekly column entitled *Faith and Justice*, as well as articles and blogs. Father Reese, the former Editor-in-Chief of *America Magazine*, is currently a writer and lobbyist based in Washington, D.C. He is the author of *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*, which looks at the people, the politics and the organizational structure of The Vatican.

In 2014, Father Reese was appointed by President Barack Obama to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Father Reese travelled to Italy in October 2015 for the Synod of Bishops of the Family.

**Andy Hargreaves**

Andy Hargreaves is an educator, researcher, blogger, writer, twitter enthusiast and special advisor in education to the Premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne, and the Education Minister, Liz Sandals. He is the founding editor of two scholarly journals. In January 2015 Andy was ranked the #6 Edu-scholar with most influence on U.S. policy. Andy consults with organizations and governments all over the world and is currently the Thomas More Brennan Chair of the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. He was the co-founder and co-Director of the International Centre for Educational Change at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Andy has cultivated *100 Quotes to Teach and Lead By*, and authored over 30 books with his most recent publication entitled *Uplifting Leadership*, where he unveils that “Leading from the middle results in uplifting the people you serve by uplifting the people who serve them.” He will share the impact of leading from the middle that leads to benefits for students and educators. Andy is a dynamic and motivational speaker and presenter.