

## Learning Environment

Policy Number LE-18

# Voluntary Self-Identification for Students of First Nation, Métis and Inuit Ancestry

The Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB) provides students of First Nation, Métis and Inuit ancestry and their parents/guardians the opportunity to voluntarily self-identify. Data collected supports the implementation of the *Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* as a foundation in addressing historic inequities. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada highlights the important role of education. The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations, SMCDSB's strategic plan, mission and vision statements further addresses historic disadvantages in ensuring all students reach their full potential.

SMCDSB endorses the following statement concerning the critical role of education to the path forward at this time of truth and reconciliation:

Let us find a way to belong to this time and place together. Our future, and the well-being of all our children rests with the kind of relationships we build today.  
- Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, Truth and Reconciliation Honorary Witness

### References

- [\*Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework\* \(2007\)](#)
- [\*Building Bridges to Success for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students\* \(2007\)](#)
- [\*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action\* \(2015\)](#)
- [\*Ministry of Education: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Connections - Elementary\* \(2016\)](#)
- [\*Ministry of Education: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Connections - Secondary\* \(2016\)](#)
- [\*Ontario Guidance and Support for Race-based Data Collection Standards\* \(2017\)](#)

### Procedural Guidelines Follow

- Approved: Board Meeting #06-2009 (Wednesday, March 25, 2009)*
- Revised: Board Meeting #08 - 2011 (Wednesday, March 23, 2011)*
- Reviewed: Board Policy Review Committee Meeting #03-2015 (Wednesday, March 11, 2015)*
- Reviewed: Board Policy Review Committee Meeting #05-2022 (Wednesday, May 30, 2022)*
- Revised: Board Meeting #08, Wednesday, June 15, 2022*

# Procedural Guidelines Supporting Voluntary Self-Identification for Students of First Nation, Métis and Inuit Ancestry

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## 1. PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND STAFF

- a) For students, parents/guardians and staff of First Nation, Métis and Inuit ancestry wishing to participate in Voluntary Self-Identification, it is important to note that proof of status or Métis citizenship is not required for this provincial school board initiative.
- b) SMCDSB's [Universal Student Registration](#) (Section C) includes First Nation, Métis and Inuit fields and references Policy LE-18 for review and completion at the beginning of the school year as applicable.
- c) New student of First Nation, Métis and Inuit ancestry who may wish to participate in Voluntary Self-Identification are to begin with the [Online Student Application](#) process.
- d) [Current and Returning students](#) of First Nation, Métis and Inuit ancestry who wish to opt-in or opt-out of the Voluntary Self-Identification will have the opportunity to do so via the [Universal Student Registration](#) (Section C), or working directly with the school as applicable.
- e) Students transitioning from a federal First Nation school to a provincial school under an Education Services Agreement who may wish to participate in the Voluntary Self-Identification would also complete Section C of the [Universal Student Registration](#).
- f) Staff and SMCDSB Trustees are expected to read and understand Policy LE-18 and the supporting procedures and guidelines.

## 2. CONFIDENTIALITY: DISCLOSURE OF STUDENTS' PERSONAL INFORMATION

- a) Pursuant to Section 266 of the Education Act, a student's Ontario Student Record (OSR) is privileged and only available to the supervisory officer, the principal, teachers and designated early childhood educators for the improvement of instruction and other education of the pupil. The contents of a student's OSR may only be disclosed for any other purpose with the consent of the pupils' parent/guardian or the Adult Pupil.

- b) Personal information is collected, used and maintained, in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Education Act. It may be accessed by the student and the parent/guardian of a student under 18 years of age.

### 3. DATA COLLECTION

- a) Data collected for students of First Nation, Métis and Inuit ancestry will inform SMCDSB programming to support student well-being and overall achievement with a focus on:
- Literacy and numeracy
  - Retention of students in school
  - Graduation rates
  - Advancement to postsecondary education
- b) Aggregate data may be shared as required confidentially through the Ontario Student Information System (OnSIS), with the Ministry of Education, and the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)

### 4. DEFINITIONS

Due to the fact that terminology and/or legal definitions continue to evolve, the following provides context for educational and informational purposes only. First Nation, Métis and Inuit are terms acknowledged in the Canadian Constitution with rights-bearing connotations and history that predates the creation of Canada. As we continue to learn more deeply about our shared history, it is important to understand that the historically marginalized are entitled to be referred to in terms of their preference and this preference may vary.

1. **Ancestry** - A line of descent, genealogy, family history and/or family tree that defines individual identity as part of a larger community rooted in racial identity.

2. **First Nation (Status and Non-Status)**

First Nation refers to the Original People of Turtle Island - now known as Canada with a history that is interwoven with the creation of the 1876 Indian Act, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (formerly Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) and subsequent registry system.

Status refers to peoples registered under the Indian Act who identify with a First Nation community/ancestral land.

Non-status refers to peoples who identify with a First Nation community/ancestral land but are not registered under the Crown-registry system.



3. **Inuit** - Inuit use several terms to describe “the people” dependent upon dialect and region. However, the term “Inuit” is commonly used as it means “the people” and generally refers to *the* Original People whose homeland is the Canadian Arctic which includes portions of the three Territories: Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut in addition to northern Quebec and northern Labrador. It is also important to note that the Inuit population across our region is increasing due to environmental, housing and economic security.
  
4. **Métis** - [The History of Métis in Ontario](#) are a distinct Indigenous people with a unique history, culture, language, and territory that includes the waterways of Ontario, surrounds the Great Lakes, and spans what was known as the historic Northwest.

The Métis Nation is comprised of descendants of people born of relations between Indian women and European men. The initial offspring of these unions were of mixed ancestry. The genesis of a new Indigenous people called the Métis resulted from the subsequent intermarriage of these mixed ancestry individuals.

Distinct Métis settlements emerged as an outgrowth of the fur trade, along freighting waterways and watersheds. In Ontario, these settlements were part of larger regional communities, interconnected by the highly mobile lifestyle of the Métis, the fur trade network, seasonal rounds, extensive kinship connections and a shared collective history and identity.

[Supreme Court of Canada / Constitution Act](#): The term “Métis” in [s. 35](#) of the [Constitution Act, 1982](#) does not encompass all individuals with mixed Indian and European heritage; rather, it refers to distinctive peoples who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, developed their own customs, and recognizable group identity separate from their Indian or Inuit and European forebears. A Métis community is a group of Métis with a distinctive collective identity, living together in the same geographical area and sharing a common way of life. The purpose of [s. 35](#) is to protect practices that were historically important features of these distinctive communities and that persist in the present day as integral elements of their Métis culture.

The Métis Nation of Ontario [registry and citizenship information](#) is reflective of the National Métis Council, both recognized service providers as per their organizational structure and ballot elections.



## 5. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) has deepened our understanding about historic inequities experienced by First Nation, Métis and Inuit in the colonization of Canada as well the lingering impact. As we are called to learn from the past, to help in the present it is understood that education today is a critical gateway on the path forward.

Truth is part of new understandings as we continue to learn about our shared history in a manner that is safe, respectful, inclusive and reflective of equity in the classroom.

Reconciliation is part of new relationships as we continue to learn about our shared history in a manner that is student-centered with a focus on harm reduction / life promotion and reflective of Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations, our new Strategic Plan, board vision and mission, and Catholic values.

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