



**CMEC SYMPOSIUM ON  
INDIGENIZING  
EDUCATION  
JULY 5–6, 2022**

First Nations University of Canada, Regina Campus  
atim kâ-mihkosit (Red Dog) Urban Reserve,  
Star Blanket Cree Nation,  
Treaty 4 Territory

## Summary Report

***Education is boundless.  
There is no end to  
“coming to know”.***

—Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann,  
President of First Nations  
University of Canada,  
Saskatchewan



**cmeC**

Council of  
Ministers  
of Education,  
Canada

Conseil des  
ministres  
de l'Éducation  
(Canada)

**CMEC Symposium on Indigenizing Education**

# **Summary Report**

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Acknowledgements and thanks to all the Elders, Knowledge Keepers, students, panellists, and participants of the CMEC Symposium on Indigenizing Education; the Government of Saskatchewan and First Nations University of Canada for hosting the event; Encore Global for hosting the virtual aspect of this event; the CMEC Symposium on Indigenizing Education Working Group; the CMEC Indigenous Education Committee; the interpreters; and CMEC Secretariat staff.

*Ce rapport est également disponible en français.*

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# CMEC's work in Indigenous Education

Indigenous education has been a part of the work of the Council of Ministers Education, Canada (CMEC) since it was made a priority by ministers of education in 2004.

Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRCC) final multi-volume report in 2015, and its 94 Calls to Action, provincial and territorial governments have responded collectively and individually to increased demand for change and reconciliation between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and non-Indigenous people in Canada. Ministers, collectively through CMEC, have committed to continue their work to respond to the TRCC's Call to Action 63, and other education-related calls to actions, and to operate in the spirit of the objectives and principles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The CMEC Indigenous Education Plan (2019–22) aligns closely with the TRCC's Call to Action 63 by focusing on:

1. mobilizing and disseminating provincial/territorial and international successful practices and proven actions to improve Indigenous education;
2. revitalizing Indigenous languages and strengthening Indigenous culture and identity through education;
3. teaching excellence in Indigenous education; and
4. Indigenous student success and well-being in education.

## TRCC Call to Action 63 – specific to CMEC:

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 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.



# The CMEC Symposium on Indigenizing Education (2022)

The CMEC Symposium on Indigenizing Education (2022) built on the success and actionable recommendations of the CMEC Symposium on Indigenizing Teacher Education, which was held in 2018 on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations in Vancouver, British Columbia.

## What

**The overarching themes of *partnerships, awareness, well-being, and change* were identified from the 2018 symposium to frame discussions.**

- The symposium included a keynote presentation, panel discussions, reflection and discussion circles, Elders' wisdom and reflections, and cultural activities.

## Who

**First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experts, scholars, students, and Elders were the primary voices who shared their knowledge and experiences.**

- A delegation from each province and territory was invited to participate and learn from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experts and leaders.
- Delegations included ministers and deputy ministers responsible for education, government officials, educators, Elders, and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.

## When

**July 5 and 6, 2022**

## Where

**Regina, Saskatchewan**

- The symposium took place on the First Nations University of Canada Regina campus, situated on the atim kâ-mihkosit (Red Dog) Urban Reserve, Star Blanket Cree Nation, and Treaty 4 Territory.

## Why

**To provide educators and administrators with an opportunity to learn from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit leaders, with a focus on decolonizing education.**



## Actionable recommendations

Over the course of the symposium, actionable recommendations emerged from the key ideas raised during the keynote address, the various panels, and the reflection and discussion circles.

Presented below, these recommendations operationalize the foundational ideas and aspirations that symposium participants underlined throughout the event, with an overarching focus on measurable and tangible change at all levels of education. The recommendations call for sustained and meaningful collaborations with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and seek to engage all parties involved in education, including, but not limited to: provincial and territorial ministers responsible for education at all levels, individually and collectively through CMEC; scholars; educators; administrators; and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. These recommendations also recognize the particular circumstance, geographical situation, and historical and cultural heritage, respectively, of the various communities in Canada. Implementation of these recommendations, therefore, requires an approach that is adapted to the unique needs and relationships of these communities in both urban and rural areas, while remaining ambitious in scope.



*We have to make sure that we  
walk our talk.*

—Dr. Angela James, Education  
Director, Indigenous Languages  
and Education Secretariat at  
the Department of Education,  
Culture and Employment,  
Northwest Territories

Lastly, these recommendations are aligned with a set of emerging themes and are grounded in holistic education principles that were reinforced throughout the symposium. These principles affirm that:

- First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit, and specifically youth and Elders, should be actively included and represented in all education decision-making and implementation efforts, in culturally relevant and safe environments;
- education is a lifelong journey;
- education and policymaking should foundationally incorporate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming; and
- education should integrate place-based learning as well as local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures and languages in all areas and levels of education.



Emerging themes	Actionable recommendations
<b>Authentic relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster meaningful and effective relationships between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and partners working in Indigenous education to support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners' sense of belonging and to challenge existing power structures.</li> <li>Engage regularly with a multitude of partners, including representatives of federal, provincial and territorial, and Indigenous governments, to develop effective strategies and resources for Indigenous education.</li> <li>Hold more regular multipartite gatherings focusing on critical topics in Indigenous education, including at the pan-Canadian level, to continue to support reciprocal partnerships.</li> <li>Ensure funding security for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit–led community initiatives and for Indigenous learners and educators through satisfactory and sustainable programs that demonstrate trust in Indigenous governance, based on expressed community needs and definitions.</li> </ul>
<b>First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming in education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and disseminate resources and tools to assist educators and administrators to incorporate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming in learning environments.</li> <li>Identify and eliminate the barriers to effective recognition of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge and practices, including existing systems of accreditation for teaching.</li> </ul>
<b>Well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create holistic policies and programs that aim to sustainably support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners' and educators' health and sense of belonging, based on their own needs and definitions.</li> <li>Engage regularly with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners and educators about their well-being and respond to their recommendations for structural improvements.</li> <li>Provide effective support, including financial support, for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners, educators, and decision-makers to confidently exercise autonomy and self-determination in their education-related choices.</li> <li>Support parents and community members in decision-making related to the education of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children by openly sharing information and engaging in regular dialogue.</li> </ul>



*You have to think back and reflect on what you are actually doing to support that individual so that they can be successful in the space you are bringing them to.*

—Autumn LaRose-Smith,  
Student Panellist, University of  
Saskatchewan



*Relationships go far past high school and elementary school and university, and far past education in general. Because in real life we're not always in school, but we're still learning.*

—Grayson Hanley, Student  
Panellist, Martensville High  
School, Saskatchewan  
(recent graduate)



*Indigenization means that you are walking alongside or being led by Indigenous peoples.*

—Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann,  
President, First Nations  
University of Canada,  
Saskatchewan

Emerging themes	Actionable recommendations
<b>Anti-racism, anti-oppression, and reconciliation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge existing barriers to inclusion and develop and implement anti-racist education policies and programs as an instrument for equity building and systemic change.</li> <li>• Develop, disseminate, and regularly update resources and tools aimed at guiding the practical implementation of anti-racism and anti-oppression in learning environments.</li> <li>• Share Indigenous education CMEC resources more widely to support transparency and accountability when exchanging information, particularly with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit partners.</li> <li>• Recognize and address the intergenerational and ongoing impacts of racist and colonial practices on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners, educators, and administrators, including the impacts of the residential and day school systems as well as the Sixties Scoop and Millennial Scoop.</li> </ul>
<b>Languages and cultures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages as official languages.</li> <li>• Continue to meaningfully support and improve Indigenous-language and cultural education, including by strengthening curricula and by providing effective funding to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit-led community initiatives.</li> <li>• Ensure that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit language teachers and learners are provided with effective support and resources to be successful, including satisfactory salaries and the implementation of long-term programs that provide stability.</li> <li>• Promote access to education and services delivered entirely in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages, including immersion programs.</li> <li>• Develop authentic, culturally informed, and responsive evaluation measures for proficiency in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages that support the decolonization of assessment.</li> </ul>



Elder Alma Poitras



Elder Raigelee Alorut



Elder Noel Milliea



Elder Myra Laramée



Elder Verna DeMontigny

## Ensuring cultural relevance

With the objective of fostering the incorporation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming and of grounding the aspirations and proceedings of the symposium in a culturally relevant frame, clear intentions and processes were set to elevate the voices of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Elders and students, to respect local ceremonies and protocols, and to celebrate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages and cultures.

### The role of Elders and Knowledge Keepers

Following practices from the CMEC Aboriginal Educators' Symposium (2015) and the CMEC Symposium on Indigenizing Teacher Education (2018), each province and territory was invited to include an Elder or Knowledge Keeper in their delegation.

Elders held an especially significant role in respecting ceremony and protocol throughout the event. Host Elders Maria Campbell and Calvin Racette helped ground the symposium by providing opening and closing prayers and by sharing their wisdom and reflections on the various sessions of each day. In respect of local First Nations customs, Elders Alma Poitras and Sam Isaac led a pipe ceremony each morning prior to symposium proceedings.

### The role of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students

Each province and territory was also invited to include a First Nations, Métis, or Inuit student in their delegation to ensure representation of youth among participants. In addition to the student panel held on day 1 of the symposium, the participation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students ensured that youth leadership was represented.

The shared wisdom from youth and Elders echoed throughout the various sessions as traditional knowledge, community relations, and future-oriented perspectives jointly infused the two-day dialogue.





## Celebrating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit spaces, languages, and cultures

Ensuring a meaningful acknowledgement and connection to land was an important element of the symposium. The close partnership between CMEC as a host and First Nations University of Canada allowed in-person participants to engage with both indoor and outdoor spaces that centred First Nations ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming. Virtual participants were invited to engage with online cultural resources provided through the virtual platform.

Local First Nations culture was recognized and celebrated in a number of ways, most prominently during the opening and closing ceremonies, during the symposium dinner offered to in-person participants on the evening of day 1, and during the cultural activities offered to in-person participants in the afternoon of day 2.

Lastly, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages were omnipresent during the symposium, as a number of panellists and participants spoke in their respective languages, often during their introductions.



## Opening ceremonies

A Grand Entry ceremony opened the symposium, with the carrying of the Eagle staff by Kelsey Star Blanket Jr. The ceremony also included flag bearers: the Honourable Gordon S. Wyant, K.C., carried the Canada flag; Dylan Kenny carried the Treaty 4 flag; the Honourable Dustin Duncan carried the Saskatchewan flag; and Grayson Hanley carried the Métis Nation flag. The Red Dog Drum Group sang the Grand Entry song as well as a flag song and a victory song.

Following the Grand Entry, hosts Merelda Fiddler-Potter and Neal Kewistep welcomed all participants and opened the symposium according to local protocol, including a land acknowledgement.

Elder Maria Campbell, a member of the Métis Nation, welcomed all participants and offered an opening prayer for the symposium.

Amanda Goller and Kiefer Paul sang the Métis anthem, followed by Fallyn Baptiste who sang the Canadian anthem in Cree.

Participants were also officially greeted on behalf of all education ministers by the Honourable Gordon S. Wyant, K.C., Minister of Advanced Education of Saskatchewan. Minister Wyant welcomed all participants and acknowledged the enthusiasm to learn and contribute to the discussion of Indigenizing and decolonizing education.



*It takes exceptional commitment to recognize both our unique and our common challenges and then work together on a path ahead, in the spirit of reconciliation.*

—The Honourable  
Gordon S. Wyant, K.C.,  
Minister of Advanced  
Education, Saskatchewan





## Keynote address, panels, and reflection and discussion circles



On day 1 of the symposium, Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, President of First Nations University of Canada, provided the keynote address, and two panels of experts were also convened. The topics of each panel were as follows:

- Holistic Approaches to Education and Indigenous Student Experience; and
- Anti-racism, Anti-oppression, and Reconciliation.

On day 2, one expert panel was held entitled:

- Indigenous Languages and Cultures.



On both days, host Elders Maria Campbell and Calvin Racette shared their insights and perspectives on the various presentations, and all participants were invited to engage in reflection and discussion circles to further discuss the topics addressed. A rapporteur for each circle then shared the key elements of the discussion and their recommendations with all participants. Virtual reflection and discussion circles were held via online meeting rooms.



The following pages summarize the exchanges and discussions that took place during the panels as well as the reflection and discussion circles.

Zoey Roy, artist in residence during the event, was present for all keynote addresses, panel presentations, and reporting from reflection and discussion circles. She captured key messages and aspirations in original spoken word songs and poems performed during the closing ceremonies.





## Keynote address

Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann delivered the keynote address for the symposium, entitled “Indigenous Knowledge Systems in 2022: Taking Account.”

Dr. Ottmann focused on several concepts, including biomimicry, i.e., learning from nature; lifelong learning; **okinohmakē**—a word that means “teacher” and that is inextricably connected to the land—and the interpretation of education as “coming to know,” a principle drawn from Dr. Gregory Cajete’s work. She also referenced the film *Waniska – An Awakening of Indigenous Knowledge* and focused on the concept of “we see, we feel, we change.”

Dr. Ottmann then introduced a key guiding question in Saulteaux:

- **ānīn ēšīnhkāsowan?** (Where and who are you connected to?)

She explained that answering these questions offers a strong foundation for effective leadership and reciprocal relationships, in turn fostering more fruitful dialogue for purpose-driven action and change—including in policymaking. From this foundation, an additional, multivalent question tied to the philosophy of seven generations can be asked:

- **wah-nān-geen?** (Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? What are my responsibilities?)

Dr. Ottmann also spoke of moral, ethical, and legal obligations, notably citing visionary leaders such as Ahtahkakoop and Shingwaukonse, as well as a roadmap that includes the Treaties, recommendation 3.5.14 of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples, Article 14 of UNDRIP, and the TRCC’s Call to Action 63. With those items in mind, she discussed the processes of developing and implementing relevant, meaningful, and effective change strategies for creating ethical spaces, and incorporating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming in education strategies in a way that necessarily weaves both Western terms of reference and Indigenous protocols.

In closing, Dr. Ottmann discussed Indigenous students and the challenges they face, particularly in relation to their health and wellness. She called on provincial and territorial governments to uplift Indigenous schools and postsecondary institutions in which Indigenous voices do not have to advocate for space.

*There is a significant difference between education and schooling. Schooling is bound: it’s bound by walls, bound by curricula, bound by the abilities of the instructor. For Indigenous peoples, schooling is confining. Education is lifelong.*

*For Indigenous peoples, learning and creativity are entities—spirits. How do you nurture the learning spirit?*

*The world is ever evolving, and we have to be adaptive. Another part of this concept is the adaptive nature of a teacher. Teaching people to be in connection with, and to be, again, to be astutely aware and to be awake.*

— Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann,  
President of First Nations  
University of Canada,  
Saskatchewan



## Panel 1

*We all, involved here  
in CMEC, really have  
to take responsibility  
for our policies, our  
programs, our curricula.*

—Dr. Angela  
James, Education  
Director, Indigenous  
Languages and  
Education Secretariat  
at the Department of  
Education, Culture and  
Employment, Northwest  
Territories

*It is our business to take  
the child holistically.*

*If we don't educate  
[children] where they're  
going to live, how will  
they live?*

—Deputy Minister  
Rebecca Hainnu,  
Ministry of Education,  
Nunavut

## Holistic Approaches to Education and Indigenous Student Experience

In the first part of this panel, **Dr. Angela James**, **Deputy Minister Rebecca Hainnu**, and **Dr. Melanie Griffith Brice** shared their perspectives on what constitutes holistic education and how to implement this frame into provincial and territorial education systems.

### First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming in education

- Situate education and policymaking within First Nations, Métis, and Inuit conceptual frameworks whose foundations are rooted in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming.
- Acknowledge and carefully navigate the balance between Western and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit systems of knowledge.
- Tailor education to address the mind, body, and spirit of learners.
- Recognize that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners work with a multiplicity of ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming and use various systems of literacy.
- Identify the basic needs and aspirations of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners and directly attend to them.
- Prioritize place-based education, educating from and about the land.
- Explore the concepts of holism and of educators guiding each learner towards becoming the capable person they are meant to be.
- Acknowledge that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge systems value autonomy and independent observations; provide opportunities to exercise this way of knowing.

### Well-being

- Create welcoming and supportive learning environments that include positive relationships for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth.
- Recognize that within silence is choice, and pay attention when First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students or educators are silent, as it is an expression of agency.



## Panel 1

### Anti-racism, anti-oppression, and reconciliation

- Address the barriers to official recognition of holistic and ancestral knowledge and practices.
- Ensure appropriate levels of respect and recognition for Elders and Knowledge Keepers.
- Recognize and address the ongoing impact of the residential school system.

### Authentic relationships

- Create inclusive, relevant, and safe spaces for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students' voices at decision-making tables, and consider having a student advocate, such as an Elder, present.
- Acknowledge and seek to dismantle the power structures that exist in education, particularly in learning environments.
- Foster meaningful and effective relationships, including with learners as they explore and discover their identities.
- Reflect on ways to foster agency among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.

### Languages and cultures

- Integrate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages and cultures across education.

*Through our agency, that's how  
we come to know who we are.  
That's how we come to know  
our identity.*

-----  
*Indigenous peoples have  
belonged to multiliterate  
societies since time  
immemorial.*

—Dr. Melanie Griffith Brice,  
Assistant Professor, University  
of Regina, Saskatchewan





## Panel 1

*Education is more than simply knowing.*

*Education means understanding.*

—Grayson Hanley, Student Panellist,  
Martensville High School, Saskatchewan  
(recent graduate)

*To ask me what my experience was, it's  
going to be completely different from  
my peers here. And there's going to be  
a lot of similarities, because we were  
Indigenous students in an education  
system that was built to destroy us.*

—Autumn LaRose-Smith, Student  
Panellist, University of Saskatchewan

*We need to feel uncomfortable. We need  
to make sure that we're listening and  
craving change.*

—Amanda Leader, Student Panellist,  
First Nations University of Canada,  
Saskatchewan

*Eventually I assimilated, and I learned  
English. I think over time I lost my  
Inuktitut abilities, but I'm currently trying  
to relearn it. It's been really hard and  
emotional, but I'm proud. I'm proud  
to be Inuk.*

—Mary Sarah Nikki-Pisco, Student  
Panellist, Nunavut Teacher Education  
Program

The second part of this panel was dedicated to the voices of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students who shared their perspectives on where change is needed most.

- **Grayson Hanley**, a recent graduate of Martensville High School, in Martensville, Saskatchewan, spoke about the absence of opportunities to learn about his identity or about realities, such as the residential school system, Treaties, the Sixties Scoop and Millennial Scoop, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls throughout his school years. He called for holistic education to be incorporated across all systems as a vital pathway to support the development of strong and proud Indigenous identities as well as positive relationships. This includes making space for Elders, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit educators, and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit truths and ceremonies within curricula and programming.
- **Autumn LaRose-Smith**, a student at both the University of Saskatchewan and Gabriel Dumont Institute, explained that when she started going to school, a majority of her teachers had been trained in an era in which the residential and day school system still existed. She challenged participants to reflect more honestly about the realities that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students face and to refrain from perpetuating narratives that rely on trauma. She invited participants to ask themselves how they can meaningfully involve First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in their work.
- **Amanda Leader**, a student at First Nations University of Canada in Saskatchewan, acknowledged the power of student and youth voices and echoed the call to have youth at decision-making tables. She underlined the ongoing, intergenerational impact of the residential and day school system and of colonization on the experiences First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students have in all levels of their education. She spoke of lateral violence and called for stronger cultural programs to support healing among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and educators, to make sure that intergenerational trauma is not further passed down to students and colleagues.
- **Mary Sarah Nikki-Pisco**, a student in the Nunavut Teacher Education Program, shared her experience in the Nunavut school system and expressed the shock she felt when she moved from Pond Inlet to Iqaluit and finding that English was the dominant language in her school, as opposed to Inuktitut, a situation which required her to assimilate and speak English. She also shared her observations of stereotypes and the unequal treatment of Inuit and non-Inuit students in her school and the absence of Inuit educators, particularly as she progressed through education levels.

## Panel 2

### Anti-racism, Anti-oppression, and Reconciliation

**The Honourable Michèle Audette, Dr. Carmen Gillies, and Dr. Sylvia Moore** discussed challenges and wise practices involved in the development of an education system that fosters anti-racism, anti-oppression, and reconciliation, the specific role of educators, and the ways in which education can be a powerful tool for reconciliation.

#### Anti-racism, anti-oppression, and reconciliation

- Understand that racism and oppression are things that First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit experience from birth.
- Recognize that there is a significant gap in knowledge about and understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit and that education is vital to changing this reality.
- Prioritize anti-racism as the core of reconciliation.
- Ensure that teacher training aims to strengthen cultural competencies and to address biases.
- Adapt to effectively combat the ever-changing ways in which racism and oppression are expressed.
- Provide resources and learning opportunity for administrators, educators, and teacher candidates who may not know what steps to take to have challenging conversations and implement anti-racism in classrooms.
- Implement anti-racist education as an instrument for systemic change, as opposed to an isolated part of curricula.
- Ensure that, through restorative education, deficit-based thinking and discourses are not applied to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners.
- Identify and address gaps in research on the various ways in which education continues to be impacted by racism and the legacies of colonialism.
- Identify barriers that prevent anti-racism efforts.
- Avoid cultural essentialism with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners.
- Ensure that knowledge shared and safeguarded through oral traditions is equally valued.



*I have that vision that one day we will have, us too, that same place that you have in Regina right now: this university, this house where Indigenous people will invite you, invite Canadians, and share.*

— The Honourable Michèle Audette, Senator, Parliament of Canada



*Anti-racist education is foundational to reconciliation.*

— Dr. Carmen Gillies, Assistant Professor, University of Saskatchewan



*We need to immerse ourselves in the discussion and the living of it, to actually embody the work that needs to take place for change.*

—Dr. Sylvia Moore,  
Associate Professor,  
Memorial University,  
Newfoundland and  
Labrador

### Authentic relationships

- Develop and maintain respectful relationships as a necessary step towards anti-racism and reconciliation.
- Listen to the stories of lived experiences of racism and oppression and wisdom of all First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit, including children.
- Respect and support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit decision-making, and create space for Indigenous peoples to exercise self-determination and self-governance.
- Demonstrate a willingness to enter into challenging conversations as an act of reciprocity, as opposed to obligation.
- Move beyond dialogue to effective implementation of change.
- Implement restorative practices that centre on compassionate communication and relationships.
- Support educators to directly engage with local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.





## Panel 3

### Indigenous Languages and Cultures

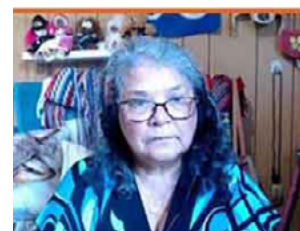
**Elder Verna Demontigny, Dr. Belinda Daniels, Dr. Janine Metallic, and Leena Evic** shared their experiences and perspectives on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages and cultures, addressing the role they play in supporting better education outcomes and wise practices for meaningfully incorporating them throughout education.

#### First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing, doing, being, and becoming in education

- Acknowledge the inherent and indivisible connection between language, culture, and identity.
- Include families and communities in the teaching and learning of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages, thus honouring the language, culture, stories, knowledge, and heritage that many families still hold.

#### Authentic relationships

- Support Elders and Knowledge Keepers to ensure they can maintain and transmit their knowledge.
- Encourage educators to provide space and time for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners to practise speaking their languages, beginning in early childhood.
- Empower First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners to speak their languages by incentivizing their use through recognized credits.
- Ensure that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit language teachers are provided with adequate resources, including time, dedicated spaces, technological training, and financial support.
- Sponsor students who wish to dedicate their full-time education to learning First Nations, Métis, or Inuit languages.
- Formally recognize, including through improved accreditation processes, the inherent expertise of fluent First Nations, Métis, and Inuit speakers to allow them to teach their respective language(s).



*Along with language comes  
your culture. It's your  
identity. It's who you are.*

—Elder Verna Demontigny,  
Chair, Prairies to  
Woodlands Indigenous  
Language Revitalization  
Circle, Manitoba



*We need people trained in  
second-language methods  
and approaches, because  
there is not one right way, and  
we also need to honour our  
teachers who are teaching  
our Indigenous languages and  
make the best space possible  
for them.*

—Dr. Belinda Daniels,  
Assistant Professor,  
University of Victoria, British  
Columbia



*Above all we need to break out of these institutional structures, which hold us in, and make a space that is more like the home.*

—Dr. Janine Metallic,  
Assistant Professor,  
McGill University, Quebec



*Adequate funding brings us to new horizons, and I encourage policy-level people to consider switching to more long-term, sustainable approaches to funding.*

—Leena Evic, President,  
Pirurvik Centre, Nunavut

### Languages and cultures

- Recognize First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages as official languages via legislation.
- Understand that multilingualism was the norm prior to contact and identify the ways in which multilingualism is beneficial and can support the flourishing of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.
- Celebrate and support opportunities in which language immersion can be implemented, including opportunities in which First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages are used outside learning environments.
- Catalyze technologies to support innovative ways to teach and learn First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages.
- Support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages education, including sign languages, through effective policies and programming as well as adequate funding of community-led initiatives.
- Develop alternative, non-colonial assessment measures for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages proficiency.

### Well-being

- Promote First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages and cultural education as a key element of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students' well-being.
- Provide relevant and safe education spaces for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners, in their own environments, in order to both support healing and respectfully acknowledge the trauma and language insecurity attached to language losses.
- Explore, research, and discuss the concept of language insecurity among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners.
- Acknowledge intergenerational trauma and the language losses caused directly and indirectly by colonial practices, including the residential and day school system, and provide culturally relevant supports and services to support language reclamation.



## Reflection and discussion circles

On both days, following the panel dialogues, all symposium participants were invited to engage in reflection and discussion circles. In smaller groups, participants were able to further explore the topics addressed, share their perspectives, and bring forward recommendations, which have been reflected in the overarching actionable recommendations detailed earlier in this report. Virtual participants were provided with the opportunity to engage and participate in reflection and discussion circles through online breakout rooms.

Designated rapporteurs from each in-person circle reported back to all participants on the key elements discussed and their recommendations. A summary of the conversations held online was also shared with participants, distilled from written reports submitted by virtual note-takers.

### Day 1

On day 1, participants explored several topics related to holistic approaches to Indigenous education and education systems that foster anti-racism, anti-oppression, and reconciliation. These topics were informed by the focus of the keynote address and by the discussions held during the first and second panels.

Participants highlighted the need to:

- foster open, safe, and culturally relevant spaces, especially at decision-making tables;
- strengthen teacher training, particularly to support improved cultural competencies among non-Indigenous educators;
- navigate education through student-centered approaches;
- acknowledge colonial history and the trauma it continues to hold;
- adopt decompartmentalized, holistic learning systems;
- incorporate anti-racist education; and
- identify ways to practically implement recommendations for change, including the TRCC Calls to Action.



*What 'Indigenizing' education really is – it's not just taking Indigenous content, incorporating it into a Western system, and evaluating it using a Western model.*

*Indigenizing education is learning content from an Indigenous viewpoint. The children must see themselves in the curriculum.*

*We live in a colonial system, all of us. Both sides have to decolonize the system.*

— Elder Calvin Racette





## Reflection and discussion circles

### Day 2

The central focus on day 2 was dedicated to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages and cultures, and the commitments needed to support effective language revitalization and promote fluency. The discussion held during the third panel informed the focus of day 2.

Participants underlined a shared responsibility held by all those involved in education, not just First Nations, Métis, and Inuit educators and learners, to implement short-term and long-term solutions. Participants also emphasized the critical importance of recognition—both the official recognition of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages as equal with English and French, and the recognition of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit expertise and methodologies to support improved certification processes of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit languages teachers. Lastly, participants called for sufficient and flexible funding.



*One of the things that was so powerful today is all of the talk about taking language and making it our own. It comes from our place on the earth, and it comes from our knowledge systems and our methodologies.*

*We learned to develop our language to fit a Western mold, and what I'm hearing is that that's not what you're going to do, and that's the most powerful thing that can happen. Even if it's one word at a time, it's going to change everything in the way that we do things.*

— Elder Maria Campbell



# Elders' reflections

During dedicated sessions on each day, host Elders Calvin Racette and Maria Campbell shared their reflections on the various dialogues held during the symposium. They shared reactions, stories, and wise advice which emphasized the following:

- meaningful relationships;
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit representation, including through cultures and languages, in learning environments, and curriculum;
- responsible allyship from non-Indigenous people;
- systemic decolonization, including the decolonization of ways of thinking;
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit protocols; and
- respectfully acknowledging the past to better move forward.

Elders from all provincial and territorial delegations also participated in the reflection and discussion circles, where they had the opportunity to share their insights and wisdom.



*We have to go back to where we were in our past to help us make sense of what we're trying to do.*

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*I encourage all of you to be wild ducks and push the system, and challenge the system, and have your voices heard.*

—Elder Calvin Racette



*The other thing that happened for me in the last two days is: **kìhokewin**.*

***Kìhokewin** means "visiting with each other"—that's the literal translation of it. But again, if you put it in a bundle, what does **kìhokewin** mean? What are all of the things that belong to it? We can't learn anything unless we visit each other, unless we can talk and laugh and do all of those wonderful things together.*

—Elder Maria Campbell



## Closing ceremonies



The proceedings to close the symposium began with a performance by artist in residence Zoey Roy, who presented original works dedicated to celebrating the work undertaken throughout the symposium.

The symposium hosts then shared closing remarks, highlighting the key elements which emerged from the various panels and reflection and discussion circles as well as the meaning they drew from this gathering.

The hosts' remarks were followed by an honour song performed by the Red Dog Drum Group. The group also sang for the Grand Exit, during which the flag bearers who brought the flags in during the opening ceremonies marched them out.

Following the Grand Exit ceremony, the CMEC Symposium on Indigenizing Education (2022) officially came to a close.

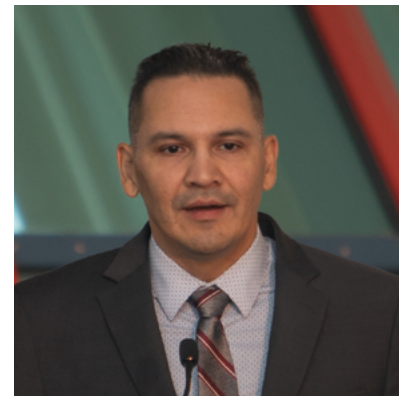


*It's changed so much from when I first started as a journalist, as that lone voice, and now we're all together, we're sharing all of these stories, and we're learning from one another.*

*Being able to gather like this, to learn how someone else did it, is probably the most valuable thing.*

*In academia and education, sometimes we're taught the knowledge is always outside. But the knowledge is inside of us—sometimes we have to reawaken that.*

—Merelda Fiddler-Potter,  
Symposium Host



*I remember how hard it was coming out of these systems and how much work we've actually put in to improve these systems. It's getting better.*

*I can't wait for all of us to share even more.*

—Neal Kewistep,  
Symposium Host







