



Fondation  
Rideau Hall  
Foundation

# Indigenous Teacher Education NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1 - GROW

## Introduction & Welcome

### Dr. Annette Trimbee

Chair, National Advisory Committee on Indigenous Teacher Education (NACITE)

**Welcome to this new series of Indigenous Teacher Education newsletters.** This edition centres on Grow, a call to action and a commitment to expanding meaningful pathways for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students to become teachers and leaders in their communities.

Across the country, the need to strengthen Indigenous teacher education has never been more urgent, nor more promising. This work is not only about increasing the number of educators. It is about transforming education so that it truly reflects and honours the knowledge systems, cultures, languages, and lived experiences of the communities it serves.

As Chair of NACITE, I am deeply honoured to work alongside Indigenous leaders and educators whose vision and dedication are shaping this future. The Grow priority reflects a shared commitment to opening doors via pathways grounded in culture and community.

These pathways are more than routes into a profession; they are powerful investments in resilient learners, thriving communities, and education systems that are responsive and inclusive.

The Rideau Hall Foundation, together with many partners, is proud to support this work as it is led by Indigenous educators, institutions, and communities. With sustained commitment and care, we have a profound opportunity to ensure Indigenous-led education is not the exception, but a foundational strength of Canada's education landscape.

In this edition, you will hear directly from students whose journeys speak to both the challenges and the possibilities ahead. Their voices, alongside stories of progress and areas where continued effort is needed, remind us that this work is ongoing and collective.

We invite you to walk alongside us. Together, we can continue to nurture and grow Indigenous teacher education across the country, creating lasting impact for generations to come.

## Grow, Nurture, Bloom: A Long-Term Commitment to Indigenous Teacher Education

The Rideau Hall Foundation's Indigenous Teacher Education Initiative is working toward a shared goal of supporting the growth of 10,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators across Canada.

Grounded in culture, language, and community, the initiative focuses on strengthening pathways into teaching and supporting education systems that reflect Indigenous knowledge and ways of learning.

It is guided by three connected priorities:

**Grow** expands pathways into teaching and increases the number of Indigenous educators entering the profession.

**Nurture** supports Indigenous students, educators, and the systems that help them thrive.

**Bloom** shares knowledge, amplifies stories, and celebrates achievements to inspire others.

# Theme - Grow



**Grow is where it begins**, planting seeds through early, intentional investment in Indigenous students, communities, and pathways into teaching. It centres Indigenous-led approaches that build capacity, strengthen identity, and support future First Nations, Inuit, and Métis educators.

Growing the profession starts early. It means helping young people see teaching as a path they can take, with role models, exposure, and encouragement. It also means funding and expanding Indigenous teacher education programs, and ensuring there are clear, supported routes from interest to entering the classroom.

Put simply, Grow is about increasing the number of Indigenous educators by creating more opportunities and supporting their journey into the profession. It is about building strong foundations so what is planted today can grow in classrooms and communities tomorrow.

## Sector News

Across the Indigenous Teacher Education network, Indigenous-led institutions and organizations continue to advance innovative, community-driven approaches to teacher education, language revitalization, curriculum development, and student supports. Here are highlights from across the country.

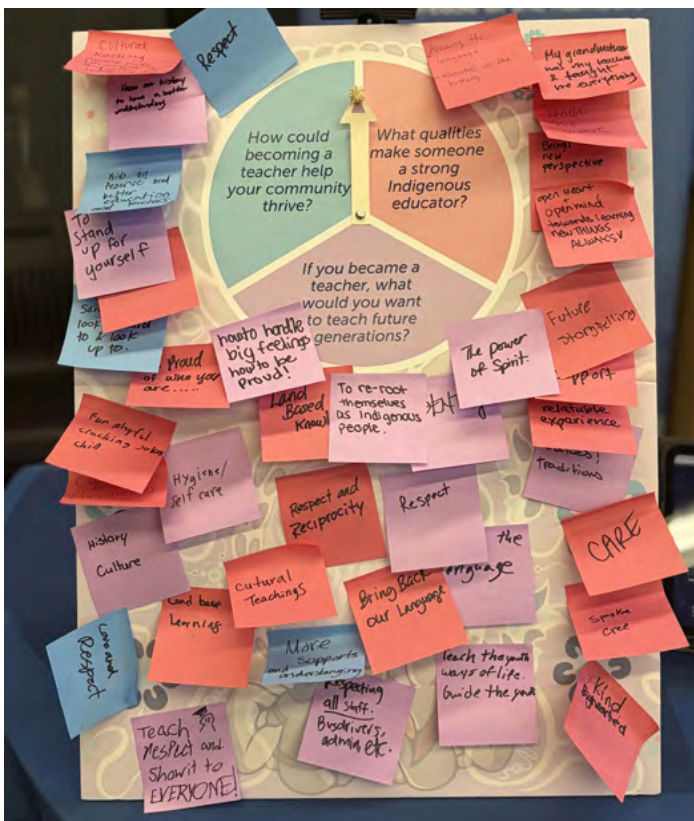
- **The Louis Riel Institute** marked a strong first year of its Red River Métis project by building a provincial educator network, establishing an Advisory Committee, and developing Red River Métis-centred professional learning supports for educators across Manitoba.
- **The Nunavut Bilingual Education Society**, in partnership with Inhabit Education, is piloting an Inuktitut literacy sequence package with teacher candidates in the Nunavut Teacher Education Program. The initiative supports future educators in strengthening Inuktitut literacy instruction while refining the resource for broader classroom use across Nunavut.
- **Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation)** established a Curriculum Working Group and Elder and Knowledge Keeper advisory structure to guide the development of culturally grounded curriculum resources. The Nation also created internship opportunities connected to archival stewardship, curriculum development, and educational planning.
- **First Nations University of Canada** is transforming its NCCIE website into Knowledge Weavers, a national hub designed to help Indigenous educators connect, share resources, and access knowledge in a culturally safe online space.



- **University nuhelot'jine thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills** established multiple admission pathways for its community-based Elementary and Secondary teacher education programs and is developing an immersion stream to support future language learners and educators.
- **The University of New Brunswick's Wabanaki B.Ed Program** hosted its annual Wabanaki Language Gathering in March, bringing together community members, teacher candidates, scholars, policymakers, and language advocates to support the reclamation and revitalization of Wabanaki languages. The program is also preparing to launch a podcast focused on language revitalization efforts.
- **The Gabriel Dumont Institute** continues to strengthen student retention and learner success across its teacher education programs through a whole-student approach that increases follow-up, reduces barriers, and strengthens pathways to community-based supports.
- **The University of British Columbia's NITEP Program** recruited 38 students to its Lax Kw'alaams field centre, marking the second-largest field centre cohort in the program's history. At least 30 Indigenous teachers are expected to graduate from the site.



- **The University of Alberta's ATEP Program** is seeing growing interest from Indigenous education students pursuing graduate studies, helping strengthen pathways into Indigenous research, teaching, and educational leadership.
- **Gakino'amaage: Teach For Canada's Endaayan Bachelor of Education Program** is creating pathways for community members to earn teacher certification close to home and within their Nations. Its first year has focused on governance and co-creation work centred on community leadership.
- **Inuit Nunangat University**, being established through the leadership of ITK, has begun foundational work on academic policies and curriculum development for the Faculty of Silatursarniq (Education), grounding the future faculty in Inuit knowledge systems and priorities.



## Events - Conferences

This summer, organizations, educators, researchers, and communities across the Indigenous teacher education landscape are coming together for gatherings, workshops, and celebrations focused on connection, learning, and shared priorities. Here are a few highlights.



-  **2026 Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) Annual Conference** (McMaster University and Mohawk College) - June 16-19, Hamilton, ON
-  **2026 Trustee Gathering on Education, Innovation and Reconciliation** (Canadian School Boards Association) - July 5-8, Whistler, BC
-  **World Indigenous Research Education Conference and Annual General Meeting** (WINHEC) - July 6-10, St. Paul, AB
-  **36th National Youth Forum and 55th Annual Meeting** (National Association of Friendship Centres) - July 24-26, Brandon, MB
-  **3rd Mawachihitotaak Metis Studies Conference** - September 20-24, Calgary, AB

Have an event we should know about? Let us know and we'll do our best to include it in a future issue.

## Guest Contributor

### **Dr. Trudy Cardinal** *Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta*

**Trudy Cardinal (Cree/Métis) and a First Nations member is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta (Canada).** She teaches Indigenous literacy, and her scholarship is grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, with commitments to interrelational narrative inquiry, ethical relationality, kinship-centred research, and community-engaged teacher education. She works alongside Indigenous children, youth, families, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers to support language revitalization, land-based learning, and storywork as pathways for wellbeing, belonging, and resurgence. Her writing attends to memory, place, and intergenerational mentorship, with a focus on Indigenous women's everyday teachings. She lives and works in Treaty 6 territory and the Métis homeland.



# Ohtêmin: Teachings from the Heart Berry

As a Cree/Métis scholar in Indigenous teacher education, I have long been fascinated by the wisdom of the strawberry, known in nêhiyawêwin as ohtêmin, the heart berry. We have much to learn from the sweet goodness of one of the first berries of the season.

I love the way strawberries grow close together, with their roots, offspring, their daughters near them, creating a web of kinship and care. This is what we need in teacher education: a sense of family, belonging, and relational responsibility. Growth does not happen alone. We need one another in order to continue to grow and thrive.

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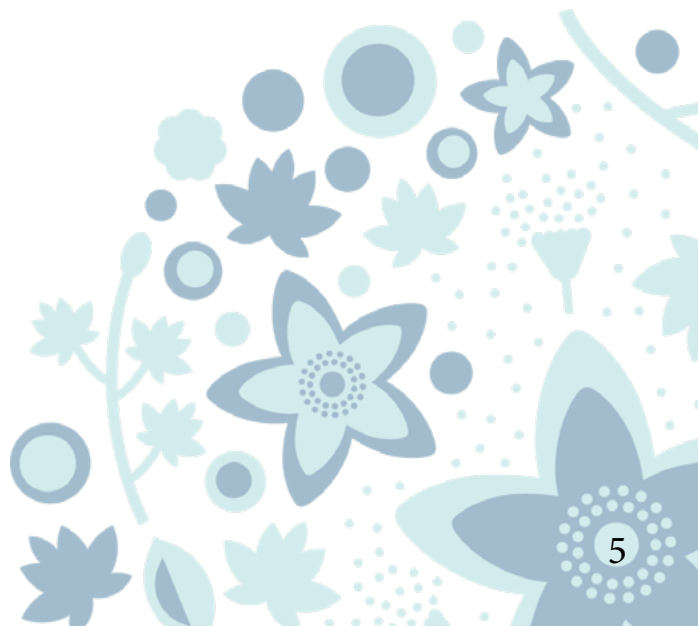
I also think about the seeds on the outside of the heart berry. There is vulnerability in carrying what is usually hidden on the outside. In many ways, we also come into post-secondary education with our seeds on the outside. We bring more than a dream of becoming educators. We bring stories, languages, kinship responsibilities, questions, gifts, and teachings already rooted in family, community, and the land. Our strength grows stronger through these connections.



The strawberry also teaches us about forgiveness. We are all human beings on this Earth walk. We are spiritual beings, and we will stumble and make mistakes. Yet we also carry the capacity to forgive, to love, and to keep walking together despite our differences.

***“the longest journey is from our  
head to our heart”***

kêhtêyak Bob Cardinal taught that the longest journey is from our head to our heart. ohtêmin invites us to keep that connection alive. This is the kind of heart-led teaching we need for future generations.



# Student Voices in Indigenous Teacher Education



In classrooms, on the land, and in community, students in Indigenous teacher education programs are learning in ways that feel different, and often deeply personal. As part of our Story Corner series, we spoke with student teachers across the country about what these programs mean to them.

For many, that journey begins with reclaiming something that was missing.



"I was raised without my culture. And that discovery is helping me bring certain ideals and cultural ways into education," says Brayden Tonkin. "There's a lot of Indigenous-based activities at Lakehead University... it teaches you hands-on instead of just learning through slides or writing."

These programs are not just about coursework. They are about connection, to land, to language, and to community.

***"learning about my Métis identity made me realize that in-between, isn't a gray zone... that's the perfect spot to be."***

"I felt like I had cultural understandings... but I was too First Nations to hang out with white people, but too white to hang out with First Nations people," says Gray Scramstad. "Being able to go into SUNTEP and learn about my Métis identity made me realize that that middle, that in-between, isn't a gray zone... that's the perfect spot to be."

Others describe a similar shift, from feeling disconnected to finding a sense of purpose within that learning.

"I didn't have an identity. I didn't know who that Mii was. I was always a member of the outcasts," says Joseph Lane. "But now doing this, I realize I can bridge that connection. And to me, that's so invaluable."

That sense of connection is reflected in how students learn.

"The beauty of Indigenous knowledge is that it's not contained by a box. It's the land," says Joseph. "You can literally go outside and learn millions of things."

"When you learn on the land, I think it's so much easier to take in," adds Mehki Molleken. "You are immersed in the community that this language was spoken in, and it's easier to retain that knowledge."

Language and community shape that experience as well.

"That sense of community is so much more amplified when there is language," says Gray, "because it sets the whole environment for culture... for connection, for how people relate to one another."



From that foundation, students begin to think about the kind of educators they want to become, and why that matters.

"It felt really important to me to be able to have an influence in the classroom," says Blake Lovas. "As an Indigenous person, to have that influence in Indigenous

curriculum and teaching the things I was lucky to grow up and know about.”

For many, that role is about being a bridge, for students who may be navigating similar experiences.

“If these are students that are in the public school division that I can work with and I can bridge that connection, to me that’s so invaluable,” says Gray. “Being able to be that guide that can make culture approachable and language approachable.”

It also speaks to the importance of representation in classrooms.

“Having a strong Indigenous male role model... I think that’s important,” says Mehki Molleken. “If I can bring my Indigenous views and help guide their path... to be that

person some students might not have.”

“I think it just helps a lot with kids growing up and becoming their own self,” adds Breanna Molnar Paul. “If you’re teaching the right information... through a positive light, it will help younger minds grow.”

Indigenous teacher education is centred around rebuilding connections, restoring knowledge, and creating classrooms where more students can see themselves, not on the margins, but exactly where they belong.

**Discover more stories from Indigenous teacher education students, educators, and leaders in our full Story Corner series: <https://indigenousteachers.canadiangeographic.ca/>**

## ITEP Stories / Project Spotlight

### Explore the map: Pathways into Indigenous Teacher Education

Did you know that Indigenous Teacher Education Programs date back to the late 1960s?

The earliest programs began as community-driven responses to a clear need: more Indigenous teachers in classrooms, teaching in ways that reflect language, culture, and lived experience. One of the first programs launched in 1968 in the Northwest Territories, creating a model for community-based teacher education that would later be adopted across the country.

That legacy is visible across Canada. And for the first time, you can explore it in one place.

[Explore the map](#)

#### What the map shows

The map highlights Indigenous Teacher Education Programs across Canada, but it also tells a deeper story about how these pathways have evolved over generations.

##### **Early foundations, building pathways in community**

In the Northwest Territories, the Teacher Education Program (TEP) began in 1968 as a short-term training program for classroom assistants. It quickly expanded



into diploma and degree pathways, helping establish one of the first community-based models of teacher education in Canada.

##### **From programs to Indigenous-led institutions**

In Saskatchewan, work led by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians in 1969 resulted in the creation of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in 1976, now First Nations University of Canada. In partnership with the University of Regina, this marked a shift beyond individual programs toward Indigenous-led post-

secondary institutions, embedding teacher education within a broader system rooted in culture, language, and community.

### Expanding access through flexible models

In Alberta, early community-led initiatives like those at Blue Quills First Nations College evolved into what is now the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP), delivered with the University of Alberta and partner colleges. Today, ATEP includes cohort-based and online options, allowing students to remain in their home communities while completing their degrees.

***“Indigenous teacher education is not new. It is decades in the making, built by communities, shaped by advocacy, and sustained by generations of students and educators.”***

### Designing pathways grounded in language and culture

In Nunavut, the Nunavut Teacher Education Program (NTEP), delivered through Nunavut Arctic College in partnership with southern universities, was established in 1979 to better serve Inuit communities. It has grown into a layered pathway, from certificate to diploma to degree, with learning grounded in Inuktitut and Inuit knowledge.

### New models, shaped by today’s realities

Newer programs continue this evolution. The Wabanaki Bachelor of Education, delivered through the University of New Brunswick, allows students to complete their degree from home, with land-based gatherings and Mi’kmaq or Wolastoqey language learning embedded directly into both coursework and practicum.



There is a clear progression - from early programs created to meet urgent needs, to flexible, community-rooted models that centre language, culture, and connection to place. Together they have supported thousands of Indigenous educators across Canada, and continue to grow.

The map shows that Indigenous teacher education is not new. It is decades in the making, built by communities, shaped by advocacy, and sustained by generations of students and educators.

### Start exploring

Whether you are considering teaching, supporting this work, or simply want to understand it better, the map offers a place to begin. Each click reveals a program, a story, a history, and a path forward.



# Resources

A selection of resources, opportunities, and initiatives supporting Indigenous teacher education, language revitalization, and community-led learning across the network.



 **Knowledge Weavers Indigenous Education Hub:** First Nations University of Canada is inviting educators, communities, institutions, and organizations to participate in the co-development of 50+ culturally responsive resources and two micro-credentials focused on Indigenous worldviews, languages, and ethics. There are also opportunities to contribute through mentorship, resource testing, storytelling, workshops, and participation in the Advisory Committee. To learn more or participate contact: [dstill@firstnationsuniversity.ca](mailto:dstill@firstnationsuniversity.ca)

 **Indspire Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries and Scholarships:** Applications for Indspire's latest round of Building Brighter Futures (BBF) bursaries and scholarships close on **August 1**. Indigenous students pursuing post-secondary studies, skilled trades, apprenticeships, and technology programs can apply through a single application to be considered for a wide range of financial supports. Learn more at [Bursaries & Scholarships | Indspire](#)

## Thank you!

As Indigenous teacher education initiatives continue to take root and flourish across the country, we are guided by a long term vision grounded in relationship, responsibility, and respect. Our Grow – Nurture – Bloom newsletter framework reflects how Indigenous teacher education unfolds through patience, care, and deep connection to land, language, and community.

As an Indigenous teacher, I am deeply grateful for the path we are walking together. This journey has been shaped by many before us, our ancestors and relations who planted seeds through their leadership, advocacy, and vision. Building upon their work, we are honoured to support Indigenous led project teams as they create education programs and resources rooted in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis worldviews, cultures, and knowledge. It is both an honour and a responsibility to walk alongside communities, students, and educators as these seeds continue to grow.

With the generous support of the Mastercard Foundation, the Rideau Hall Foundation's Indigenous Teacher Education Initiative continues to support Indigenous led teacher education through collaboration, learning, and shared commitment to future generations.



In our next issue, we'll share more about the Indigenous Teacher Education Initiative's upcoming granting open calls and new opportunities to support Indigenous led work across the country. We look forward to continuing to connect with you along the way and encourage you to share this newsletter with others who may wish to subscribe and learn alongside us.

— **Rachel Mishenene**  
**Director, Indigenous Teacher Education Initiative**

The Rideau Hall Foundation (RHF) is a non-partisan national charitable organization that amplifies and supports the past, present and future impact of Canada's Governor General, and seeks to engage all Canadians in the core elements of Canadian democracy. By working in partnership, the RHF celebrates excellence while creating opportunities and connecting communities, all towards the shared purpose of a better Canada.

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