First Nation Treaty Education in Ontario

Circle of Light 2011: A First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Conference
November 14, 15,16, 2011
We Are All Treaty People

- Video clip
http://hzsd.ca/Programs/Treaty%20Education/Treaty%20Home%20Page
What is a Treaty?

- Treaties represent a relationship – built on mutual peace, respect and friendship
- Treaties are a way to explain how parties intend to “treat” each other for the duration of a relationship
- Recognize First Nations as self-governing nations – which is acknowledged and protected by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Canadian Constitution
- There are obligations and benefits on both sides of the Treaties
What is a Treaty?

• Before Confederation, the Dominion of Canada signed treaties with First Nations.

• After Confederation – numbered treaties
  o the Government of Canada continues to negotiate modern treaties (eg comprehensive and specific land claims)

• Set aside of reserves was a common element

• About land, education and medicine - with the disappearance of traditional food and shelter treaties began to include annuities

• Are living documents – do not expire
Who does a Treaty Benefit?

• They are considered mutually beneficial arrangements that guarantee a co-existence between the treaty parties.
• Newcomers and their descendents benefit from the wealth generated from the land and the foundational rights provided in the treaties
• All people in Ontario are Treaty people.
Importance of Understanding Treaties

• Living documents
  o Must be constantly reviewed and studied – must reflect ongoing realities - can learn from mistakes of past towards a more effective, compassionate and realistic agreements in the future

• Beneficial for our coexistence
  o sharing of resources
  o First Nations relationship with the crown

• Obligation of honour on the part of all of us, to understand and fulfill obligations
Importance of Incorporating Treaty Education

• Hindrances to the learning spirit of Aboriginal people
  o racism, irrelevant curricula, lack of knowledge by teachers regarding culture, history, language and social conditions of Aboriginal people
  o the unresponsiveness of public education system to the needs of Aboriginal people
Racism

• Colonization and racism are not things of the past
• When not acknowledged it can contribute to low self-esteem
• Is it the child – or the system?
Irrelevant Curricula

• Curriculum does not reflect culture, histories and real life conditions
  o contributes to the high dropout rate
• Little mention of the contributions of Aboriginal peoples to the larger society
• Often infused with colonial interpretations of the past
• Inhibits transmission of culture and language to future generations
Teachers

• Teacher educational programs must address colonialism and racism and respect the Treaty relationship as understood by First Nations as well as the Crown

• 'Most Teachers Don't Know Who First Nations Are'

• We all pay when Aboriginal kids aren't given their best chance to learn.

• From the TheTyee.ca series
Social Conditions

- Largely brought about by government through policy and legislation
- Assimilative strategies continue to affect the social and cultural lives of FN peoples
- Creates and reinforces a cycle of despair, resignation, anger, hopelessness
Promising Developments

- **Saskatchewan** – Office of the Treaty Commissioner
- **Manitoba** - Treaty Relations Commissioner of Manitoba - Treaty Education Initiative
- **Ontario**
  - Ipperwash Recommendations
  - Ministry of Education Aboriginal Canada Portal – Resources for Teachers
  - First Nation initiatives
Saskatchewan

- Treaties education is mandatory in the provincial K–12 system
- Extensive information can be found at http://www.otc.ca/ and http://www.k-12treatyeducation.gov.sk.ca/
Manitoba

- Treaty Relations Commissioner of Manitoba - Treaty Education Initiative
  - pilot basis 2010/11
  - 2011/12 available to all grades 5 and 6 teachers.
  - kindergarten to Grade 4 and grades 7-12 - next
  - treaty classes will become mandatory in Manitoba schools
Ontario - Ipperwash Inquiry Recommendations

- Recommendations: Volume 2 Policy Analysis

- 29. The provincial government and Treaty Commission of Ontario should work with First Nations organizations and educators to develop a comprehensive plan to promote general public education about treaties in Ontario. The provincial government and Treaty Commission of Ontario should also work with local governments and school boards, First Nations, and community organizations to develop educational materials and strategies that emphasize the local or regional character of treaty relationships.
• 30. The Ministry of Education should establish formal working relationships with Aboriginal organizations to promote more Aboriginal perspectives and content in the elementary and secondary school curricula.

• 31. The Ministry of Education and Treaty Commission of Ontario should work with Aboriginal organizations, school boards, and teachers associations to develop appropriate, classroom-ready teaching tools and resources about Aboriginal history, treaty and Aboriginal rights, and related current events.
Aboriginal Canada Portal Resources for Teachers

- [http://www.canadiana.ca/citm/themes/aboriginals/aboriginals3_e.html](http://www.canadiana.ca/citm/themes/aboriginals/aboriginals3_e.html)
- The site is designed for students and teachers of Canadian studies, history and law
- Thematic narratives includes:
  - Aboriginals: Treaties and Relations
  - Lesson plans and ideas for educators
First Nation – Indigenous Education Coalition

• OUR TREATY HISTORY

• Features Teachers Guide 140 pgs

• Classroom set (28) of Community readers 7 of each community

• Grade 7 and 8

• resource materials from a First Nation perspective for teachers that enhance the existing Ontario Curriculum guidelines
First Nation – Treaty 9

- Interactive game
- Audio, video and photo galleries
- Teacher guides for game
- History section
First Nation – Peel Region

- April 2011 – a collaborative approach to curriculum development
- To value the presence and the rich heritage and cultures of First Nations children attending schools
- To clarify inaccuracies
- Not just historical, but present and future
- To tell the story of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation
First Nation

Union of Ontario Indians – We are All Treaty People