

High School Native Studies Classes

Jurisdiction: Saskatchewan

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Level: K – 12

Theme: Curriculum/materials

Description of Practice:

The development of Native Studies curriculum at the high school level has resulted in three separate courses:

- Grade 10 Native Studies: *Social Organizations of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples*,
- Grade 11 Native Studies: *International Indigenous Issues*, and,
- Grade 12 Native Studies: *Canadian Studies*.

In all cases, the curriculum development process was guided by the Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee (AEPAC), representing First Nations and Métis education authorities, as well as major partners in education. The Native Studies courses are intended to appeal to *all* students in the provincial education system and are recognized as a social science option for grade 12 graduation.

Background:

In support of the *Indian and Métis Education Policy* (1984), the integration of First Nations, Métis and Inuit content and perspectives in all subject areas and across all grade levels is a foundational element of provincial curriculum. Native Studies courses at Grades 10, 11 and 12 represent an opportunity to focus on the social sciences through an Aboriginal lens.

Saskatchewan students have a choice between History, Social Studies and Native Studies courses to satisfy the required social science element for grade 12 graduation. In response to low enrolment in Native Studies, AEPAC is currently suggesting a policy change that would require all Saskatchewan students to complete at least one Native Studies course prior to graduating.

Saskatchewan teachers do not have to be accredited in any of the social sciences to offer a grade 12 credit in History, Social Studies or Native Studies. In some cases, this leads to concern about the capacity of teachers who have no Indigenous Studies background to effectively teach the course. For this reason, a number of professional development activities are offered to teachers to build their capacity for teaching Native Studies.

Currently, Native Studies 20: *International Indigenous Issues* is in the process of curriculum renewal.

Development:

In order to ensure that the Native Studies courses reflected the needs of Saskatchewan First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, program teams, reference committees and implementation sessions were organized with Aboriginal representation and voice. Typically, Elders and cultural resource people have been involved throughout the process. AEPAC has two Native Studies sub-committees: one to provide guidance for curriculum renewal, and one to develop the case for Native Studies to be made a compulsory subject for all Saskatchewan students to graduate. Recently, the establishment of a *Shared Standards and Capacity Building Council*, (resulting from a Memorandum of Understanding between the province and Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) will offer opportunities for shared ownership and validation of Native Studies curriculum.

Evidence:

For the most part, students, educators and communities have embraced Native Studies as a viable option to achieve desired social science outcomes. Some criticism has revolved around the qualification of teachers, the perceived rigour within the courses, and the lack of curriculum resource materials in support of foundational objectives.

The continued existence and renewal of Native Studies courses speaks to the acceptance and value that is placed on these areas of study.

Adaptability:

Native Studies courses are scrutinized through a number of mechanisms, including Aboriginal voice/input. The fact that AEPAC views Native Studies as being something of value for all students speaks to their endorsement. Modified program guidelines have been developed and are offered as Native Studies 11, 21, 31. Native Studies 10 learning activities have been developed and are offered on-line.

Further Information:

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