

Relationships for Learning

Indigenous Education from Cultural Events to Integration

>> [Foreign]. Good morning, or sorry, good afternoon, everybody. My name is Nick Bertrand. I'm an education officer with the Ministry of Education. My colleague, Jennifer, and I, who I'll turn it over to here in a second, are excited to be with you folks today to talk about your experiences around integration with respect to indigenous content in our classrooms across the province. I want to just take a moment to thank Elder Irene Peters for her wonderful opening this morning and for blessing our lunch and for sitting in counsel with us here, today, to guide us down this journey. [Foreign]. Myself, Nick, I'm a teacher of [INAUDIBLE] from the Halton District School Board. Formerly, I was an Aboriginal Education Lead. So I'm happy to be here at the Ministry. And Jennifer and I are working in relation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in calls to action and how our curriculum, specifically in SSHG and CWS, can meet those calls. And so to you, Jenn.

>> I'm Jennifer Farrell-Cordon. I have been leading the review for social studies, history, geography and Canadian and World Studies. I see some familiar faces. Hello! Me again! For many, many years, as well as obviously now working with Nick on looking at how we can have the curriculum enhanced and what we can do around curriculum to integrate indigenous perspectives right through, primarily focusing on SSG and CWS. But hi. And good to see some of you again. Nice to meet new faces. I'm now permanent with the Ministry. I had been seconded for a number of years. And it just got a little bit chaotic always having to talk to my school board and kind of, you know, make background deals with them to let me stay. So I finally made the jump. So I was originally with the Toronto District School Board, taught everything from grade four to OAC. But now I'm with the Ministry as a permanent education officer doing this file because it's going to take longer than 2 years.

>> Perfect. So before we dive right into things, sort of our goal coming into today's session is to give you folks an opportunity to think about how integration can look. I'm sure many of you are well down that journey. And Jennifer's going to share some templates with you around planning for that. So we're hopeful that, although the example we may be talking about may not be your particular grade, but then you'll be able to take away the nuggets in terms of the how-to. So that's really what we're here to talk about. We're just here to get some ideas around how to continue that learning moving forward. So thank you very much for sharing back your experiences. So to come back to the pin in our conversation. I want to give some context to these two questions here. And I don't want them to be seen as hierarchical in any way. But I think a part of what you spoke to was this notion of coming back to from sort of opportunities to the integration in classrooms. And there's a bit of a cyclical nature to that. So for lack of a better word, we use the word events here to capture that nature. So as best as possible, we all know that these are connected together, that events and integration are probably one in the same thing. But for the purposes of this exercise, we're going to ask you folks to kind of tease them apart for a few moments to have this conversation. And we'd like you get, we'd

like you to think about, why are events, in relation to indigenous capacity, ability or whatever it might be, why are those events important in this continuum of learning? And we're going to be quick on this one. We're going to say about 2 minutes for that question. We're going to say go. You guys are going to hit it. Then we'll come back, and we'll get some thoughts from you. Then we're going to transition to the next question around integration. Just to get your thoughts of where we're going' with this. So when we say events, I'm thinking, as an example, many schools might choose to celebrate, for example, through powwow. That would be perhaps a larger school event. Some folks might bring in a guest speaker for the day as an event. And again, we know that these are connected together. I'm not saying they're not, but I want to talk about the importance of that terms of a continuum of learning. Does that help to context, or give some context around that conversation? And events might be taking a senior administration out to the territory to do some learning, right? Why are those pieces important in this whole continuum that we're talking about? So we'll go with 2 minutes on that, we'll popcorn back, and we'll transition.

>> You were suggesting that the event is sort of at the beginning of the continuum, that engagement piece to get people interested and excited and then the integration continues to flow throughout that. So we're taking that sort of one-offed opportunity and then embedding it through rather than just being a standalone piece.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah.

>> Jumping off point ...

>> Mm-hmm.

>> As opposed to ...

>> Well, and that kind of leads right into our next question, right? Because within these events, we want to see that going deeper, right? That's the ultimate goal is that we bring folks to the table. We touch here, we get here, and then they move forward, right? So within the integration, when we say, "Why is integration important," now we're starting to drill down to that student level, right? Sorry, events, too, will take in students, but why does getting into the classroom and doing those pieces in relation to curriculum, why is that important? So that's our follow-up question. So moving from events to integration, knowing that they're all connected, why is that level important for our work?

>> About integration, you really run the risk of the events becoming token.

>> Thank you for that point. It's a very important part of that continuum. And then as we go, when we're champions, we go out there to our buildings, and we talk

about those conversations as well. So [Foreign] for that. Other thoughts, too, about the integration piece?

>> We talked about it makes the curriculum relevant and meaningful, engaging students. It demonstrates [INAUDIBLE] all students, and it's worth learning. It's like our history, our shared history, and it grows adults with more diverse cultural knowledge and hopefully their families as well.

>> Mm-hmm. Absolutely. Thank you. Anybody else? Okay. Well, we want to share something with you folks that is around what we're calling Promising Practices, I suppose, around the integration of indigenous perspectives, ways of doing history preparations and some of those pieces. In the spring, as part of the TRC mandate that we're working with right now, we're going to explain it a little bit later, that some of our curriculum is going to become mandatory for educators to learn themselves, but also continue their learning whatever that might be, but that they will have to be teaching First Nations, Metis, and Inuit perspectives, ways of going into their classrooms. That's a really important thing. We know that was from the Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation report. To prepare for that shift, one of the things that we've been doing is we've been out capturing educators who are doing the work that we're just talking about already. We know there are champions out there who've been doing this work for a long time. And so in the spring, we did the first part of this film. We're up predominantly in the Northwest. And now we're into our second filming session, so we're down here into Southern Ontario for the most part from sort of Windsor to Quebec Corridor or Windsor to Ottawa Corridor. And we're doing the same thing, capturing folks who are doing the work really well. So we're calling it Promising Practices. What we're going to show you folks is two videos. These are the first, sorry, not the first cut. They're the first usable product that we're going to say we're going to show to the public-facing audience because this stuff will change. Right now, we've only got half of our filming done. So, this is like the buckets if you want to think of it that way. And the content and the people and the faces may change as we move forward. But we definitely wanted to have something to show you folks. We've only viewed it once before with another audience. And what we're hopeful to do is to get some thoughts about what you're hearing. So what did I see? What did I hear? What did I feel as I was watching these videos? And we're going to do two things. We're going to show you folks, we're going to call it like an intro or a trailer, that's about 2 minutes, that's really just the voices of educators and students during that filming process about what they're saying. The second video is a little bit longer. It's an intro video that we're going to use to unpack everything else that we've captured. So it's kind of an overview of everything. You're going to see some themes that emerge coming out of that. And, again, that's what we got the feel from as we went around and filmed these pieces.

>> Because I think a lot of the time people want to do integration, they just don't know where to start for integration. Not only who to go to, but they might not even know where it is within what they are teaching. And so we're trying to come up with some resources to help educators as a starting point that they can begin on their

own journey, but also with the students. So we'll go over a couple of those. Language, even in high school, the English program is a skills-based curriculum. It is not a content-based curriculum. So when you're planning your language blocks, or even in high school English, your content needs to come from somewhere. So why not from this? Why not from your science? Why not from your social studies? Why not from your history? Why not from your geography? Because then you are making the learning in your English class or in your language block relevant. Because the language curriculum, it's a skills-based curriculum. You look at the expectations in grade one, and you look at some of the expectations in grade 12, the only difference is the verbs, right? Or even their qualifiers, but it's pretty much the exact same thing. So I always look at it and say you plan from that lens. Plan from the content that is already there. And when you look at all the indigenous literature and short stories, it's there. And it's also within many of the curriculums that you can pull in. Where our resources are, you're going to see there's both First Nation, Metis and Inuit teaching and learning resources. Those are, if you are in the elementary panel, we brought in a group of indigenous writers a few summers ago to create teaching-learning modules, grades one, two, three, four, six and eight. There will be a grade seven one going in there. Grade seven is coming. It's actually done. It just hasn't been uploaded yet. But these are ones that, sort of, again, are starting points for teachers to see what is already existent in the curriculum and how can we then integrate the indigenous perspectives. It's a starting point. We all need a place with which to have our springboard. These are now in, tying integration with an event. If you're looking at Treaty Recognition Week, we now have a living library discussion guide. So if you were bringing in a guest speaker to talk about treaties, and it doesn't have to be always during Treaty Recognition Week. That week is, of course, the week to recognize it. But if you are not doing history until second semester, or your second term, do not try to force something in 'cause kids know when you're doing that. It doesn't work. But they've got a group of speakers list coming out of [INAUDIBLE]. But also, even if you do not bring in a speaker, you can have the video, the YouTubes, of Maurice Switzer or Justice Murray Sinclair talking about different treaties. So even if you, as a school, are not bringing somebody in, there are some really excellent speakers online who talk about treaties. And Maurice Switzer is very good for this area. And, of course, Justice Murray Sinclair is brilliant. When you're going through these ... These ones are sort of ... They give you activities. But it's a part one, part two, part three, sort of before you have a speaker in or listen to somebody, and it's all curriculum based. Then stuff to do when you are listening to the speaker. And then stuff to do after, so that there's an actual ... It's not just an event for the sake of, "Here it is, done. Move on. Check your box." It's actually an integration into your curriculum. We also have done, there's information more about the treaty map there as well as we've done specifically, we were asked to extract all information from the big Scope and Sequence, First Nation, Metis and Inuit Scope and Sequence to extract all information right around treaties and land claims. So the one in elementary school around treaties is not that big because of the fact that we really don't start getting into treaties until about grade seven, early grade five, when we're starting to look into some of the Peace and Friendship Treaties. But when you get into the secondary, it's much bigger, and it covers all of

the disciplines. So it's an interesting, just an additional thing. The secondary side has the same thing. I'm not going to show it. But if you go into secondary, Canadian and World Studies, resources, there are treaty resources there as well for you. Just again, and it's connected to grade 10 history and grade 10 civics and citizenship. But there's also the secondary treaty and land claim Scope and Sequence, which really is just the big Scope and Sequence, and I just did a big control F. So it's not like I miraculously did anything, it's all there. But I think those are great starting points for people to really begin. Other places where you can go? For the applied grade 9 geography, there's a new online course. Don't worry about going to it right now. But the online course has a lot of indigenous material in it as well. And even if you don't teach online, you can always extract it and use it in class in a blended format.

>> This is around Canadian and World Studies, social studies, history and geography. And we had said part of the work that Jennifer and I are doing is in relation to making learning around indigenous perspectives, histories, ways of knowing issues, both historical and current. But that is part of the task that we're working on right now in conjunction with the Calls to Action. So to position all of this, what we're going to speak to over the next couple minutes, this is sort of the Ministry's response with respect to the Calls to Action. Talk to mandatory learning around history, specifically related to residential schools, treaties, the Indian Act. You can pull up the Calls to Action. You'll see the language right in there in 62 and 63. So we're just going to share it to you because we're here to talk about CWS and SSHG. This whole strategy, although we have the Calls to Action, I want to make it sort of abundantly clear that many of the school boards even within, that's represented here, have been writing letters to the Ministry about the importance of the Ministry adopting these Calls to Action. As well, we're hearing from school boards. We're hearing from public interest groups. We're hearing from various religious groups. We're hearing from engaged citizens around the importance of this work. I think it's almost a part-time job, I would say, what Jenn and I do around responding to some of these pieces. And it's amazing to see that movement in our community. So that makes me very happy. So we're going to talk about sort of these five quick buckets. What's important to know, we're going to start at the top right here. And we're going to flip it to Jenn immediately. What is guiding this whole strategy? And this is where I really am feeling very hopeful about where we're going to go with this, is that there's a larger steering committee made up of various indigenous groups that are really guiding this whole strategy. And so we're seeing a partnership on a very sort of level platform here in terms of how we move forward. So everything that you see here ...

>> Gets passed through them.

>> Gets either passed through them or is co-developed, co-created. It's very much a partnership in that realm. So as we unpack this, know that that is what's really guiding the work that we're doing around this.

>> The key areas we're focusing on in phase one, which is what we're doing right now, is grades four to 10 because that is the mandatory learning time of students. And if you look at grade four in social studies, that starts with the early history, the early societies, 3,000 BCE is where it starts. We realized we needed to go back there, before the grade five, because when we start getting into grade five when we start talking about interactions with contact and that whole contact story, it's very difficult for kids to understand what was lost if they don't understand what was there. So we realized we need to go back to those early histories as much as we can. And we're going to be asking people to create resources, which is the other side. But because we need students to understand that there was thriving, major, brilliant societies here. So when contact occurred, it's very difficult to say what was lost if they never heard about what was lost. They don't know what was there. So that's why we're going back. And it goes up to grade 10, which is the history, because then you get the mandatory history credit. And we're also looking in terms of civics and citizenship as well because that'll tie into governance issues. So that's sort of what we call the phase one because we need to get at the mandatory age and grade appropriate learning. And if we have this done well, it's right through for a number of years right across the board. Down the road we'd be looking at phase two, foundational learning. So we start looking at kindergarten to grade three. And then going into grades 11 and 12 in terms of social sciences and humanities, as well as Canadian and World Studies. But we can't do it all at once because it's hard enough, if you can think about it, getting those four to 10, we want to get those organized and put out there as quickly as we can, which is never as fast as we want. But we want to get those out there so that people have something with which to begin. And then we go into the further. Phase three would be down the road, when we start looking at curriculum review across the board. So how do we integrate it into the science curriculum when we eventually do that? Into the language, which we know hasn't been reviewed since 2005, I think. Right, so when we start doing all of those review cycles, how do we get the indigenous ways of knowing and understanding and bring in indigenous ecological knowledge in a more real way? That will happen in phase three. So that's why, as I said, this is not a 1 or 2-year project. This is a lifetime of a project. And it will continue. So we're working on that. But for phase one, which will be what you'll start seeing hopefully more about, and what our videos are really focusing on, is the grades four through 10.

>> We recognize that there's a ton of work that needs to be done around resource supports for educators and doing it properly. So, as a big chunk of that circle that you saw there, one of the circles unto itself was resource development. And so you'll be seeing, probably within the next couple months, I'm going to say, a significant thrust to communities, subject associations, opportunities in school boards to develop such resources. And one of the things that we're really keen on looking for is the collaboration with community in the creation of these resources in whatever capacity that might look like. It's critical. One of the things that we acknowledge that we always want to vocalize our learning to our students, acknowledging that we have a tremendous amount of national level resources that we can get access to around some of these pieces. The pot begins to sort of go a little smaller when we

look at the Ontario-based opportunities for some of those resources. And then when we get to the localized resourced, localized, when I say that, I mean for example, like [INAUDIBLE] here. Do we have resources that allow our students to tap into some of those learning opportunities? So we're really looking for that precision to get down to that local level for some of these resources, especially if they're going to be developed in conjunction with the school board. This thrust to move to mandatory learning is a phase process. So it's going to take some time to get to the hard line, that, yep, now thou shall be teaching in that way. So we've got some runway here. So we're hopeful to get these resources up and running so that we can get them out in the field, so it's not a hard switchover, that these are engrained already. So that's our thought process behind some of this. But we're also, at the Ministry, we're doing some of our own work too. The Ministry has a minuscule amount of resources when we compare it to what's available out there. But we are doing some of our work around that, too, to develop pieces. You saw one of them today, the video that we're looking towards using as a jump off point to say, "Here's kind of a how-to around Promising Practices already." We're developing an online professional learning module with indigenous educators. We're in sort of the second cycle of that. And it's going to be sort of a one-on-one. It's going to be some of the key topics that folks need to know about, whether it be residential schools, the Indian Act, oppressive legislative policy. Some of these key pieces that begin to tell the narrative, that's what folks want to learn about. So it's for teachers. But then it's for the opportunity to then say, "Okay, I've learned this. How can I implement it in my classroom?" So we're going to have that available, up and running probably hopefully soon. And then what else? The teaching learning one, which Jennifer spoke to a few minutes ago. So we do have a few things kind of cooking on our end as well. But we need to lean on community for, and all of the folks in here and the work that you're doing to create these resources moving forward. And the last piece that I want to speak to around one of the big nuggets for the circle that we just showed momentarily was the idea of capacity building. We want to honor that this work has already and is ongoing in most school boards across Ontario. So it's an extra thrust to go with that. But also, if folks have missed out on opportunities to hit some of these areas where the mandatory learning is going to be made mandatory, we need to be thinking about the supports for them in their journey as well. So that's a part of the puzzle that's still evolving as we speak. But it's a big chunk of when we think about the budget, resources and capacity building are a significant, significant part of this work.