

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT 2022 **CANADA’S STATEMENT**

Canada recognizes that education is a foundation for peace, tolerance, human rights and sustainable development, and is pleased to participate in the Transforming Education Summit. Canada welcomes the opportunity to continue to prioritize quality education for all, and to mobilize action, ambition and solidarity around this global priority. This is critical as we continue to work to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning and well-being, and to strengthen our education systems to respond to the world of today and tomorrow, with a view to achieving Sustainable Development Goal -4: Quality Education.

Recognizing education as a pre-eminent public good, including its role as catalyst for advancing all the sustainable development goals, Canada has undertaken meaningful engagement with education leaders and stakeholders. To this end, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO conducted a number of consultations, including with youth, education leaders, teachers and professors, indigenous leaders and communities, and education institutions. The consultations underscored the importance of building on Canada’s ongoing work to help ensure our education systems continue to adapt and respond to the challenges of today’s world, including our ongoing work to ensure that education:

- Includes Indigenous ways of knowing and learning that promotes environmental stewardship and benefits all learners.
- Addresses racism and discrimination and promotes Global Citizenship Education, while acknowledging the hard truths of our past and reconciling relationships between groups that have historically been in conflict with one another.
- Integrates climate change education in all levels of education, from early childhood education to lifelong learning.
- Ensures participatory and engaging education that gives voice to students, particular youth and marginalized communities.
- Continues to provide and strengthen ongoing training and professional development opportunities for teachers.

In Canada, education is under the jurisdiction of the 13 provinces and territories. Through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), provinces and territories in Canada collaborate on shared priorities, which align with several of the summit’s thematic action tracks. Given their prominence as shared education priorities across Canada, this statement focuses on the commitments Canada has made in support of inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools; learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development; and, reconciliation and Indigenizing education.

Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools

Canadian society is pluralistic and open, and one in which educators, government officials, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society work to eliminate discrimination and barriers and ensure equitable and fair access to quality education for all¹. Students’ reaching their full potential is at the heart of the mission of Canada’s schools and education services. Canada continues to be a leader in equity and achievement. Canada is one of very few high-immigration countries that shows no significant achievement gap between immigrants and non-immigrants, as well as more equitable and inclusive outcomes between students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds². However, within the student population, there are groups that face disproportionate challenges in their learning journeys. Canada’s provincial and territorial education systems are putting in place policies and programs to meet ongoing challenges and ensure inclusion and success in education for all.

¹ <https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/382/Canadian-report-on-anti-discrimination-in-education-EN.pdf>

² <https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/407/Sustainable%20Development%20Goal%204%20in%20Canada%20EN.pdf>

Canada believes access to early learning and child care is essential to provide better support for families as we recover from the pandemic and to create a solid economic foundation for families across the country well into the future. That is why the Government of Canada is working with provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners with the goal of building a Canada-wide early learning and child care system that ensures all families have access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive child care no matter where they live, including Indigenous families living in urban areas, on reserve and in rural or remote communities. Investing in early learning and child care provides jobs for workers - the majority of whom are women -- enables parents, particularly mothers, to reach their full economic potential, and creates a generation of engaged and well-prepared young learners.

Reconciliation and Indigenizing education

One particular pan-Canadian priority is Indigenous education. Canada is committed to moving reconciliation forward and to work together to improve education outcomes for Indigenous students. The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* encourages provincial and territorial education ministers to support education of all Canadians on the legacy of residential schools and the history, perspectives, and contributions of Indigenous peoples in the country. Overall, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) identifies education as the key to reconciliation in Canada³. Truth and reconciliation is imperative. There is a need to incorporate a more intentional and expanded priority on Indigenizing and decolonizing learning, by embedding values that respect Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and becoming in our education systems and learning endeavours.

Since 2005, education systems across Canada have made it a priority to support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students to achieve their full potential. Successive provincial/territorial efforts and action plans of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada⁴, which have guided the work of provinces and territories, has led to improvements in Indigenous education, student achievement, mental health, and well-being, and has helped to bridge the achievement gap between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students, by sharing best practices in Indigenous education, strengthening the capacity for evidence-based decision-making, and working to support teacher training. Actions under way in individual schools, education systems, and pan-Canadian forums⁵ aim to improve opportunities and outcomes for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and to increase all students' knowledge and awareness about Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives.

As well, with respect to education for First Nations students on reserve, the TRC clearly linked reconciliation to modern, First Nation controlled education. The Government of Canada is committed to supporting First Nation control of First Nation education on reserve, so that students receive a high quality and culturally relevant education, and has worked with First Nations partners to transform funding for First Nations elementary and secondary schools on reserve. Since 2019, students in First Nation schools are supported by predictable core funding that is comparable to funding in provincial education systems, with additional investments in full-day kindergarten, language and culture, and before-and-after-school programming.

Firmly acknowledging that First Nations are best placed to make decisions on how to allocate funding to meet the needs of the schools and students in their communities, the federal approach to on reserve education provides First Nations with the flexibility to fund education programs and other priority initiatives to support their unique needs. This approach recognizes the diversity of First Nation communities by supporting the development of regional education agreements to respond to the education goals and priorities set by participating First Nation communities.

The Government of Canada also recognizes and supports Indigenous communities so that Indigenous students can acquire education and skills through higher learning. To address the educational attainment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous post-secondary students, the Government of Canada provides financial support for eligible

³ <https://www.chaireconditionautochtone.fss.ulaval.ca/doc/Publication/Honouring-the-truth-reconciling-for-the-future-01.pdf>

⁴ https://www.cmec.ca/53/Indigenous_Education.html

⁵ Most recently, the CMEC Symposium on Indigenizing Education was held on July 5-6, 2022, in Regina, Saskatchewan. The symposium gathered over 300 experts, educators, policy-makers, youth, Elders, and other actors to explore and share promising and successful practices — and challenges — in efforts to decolonize and Indigenize education, to best serve both Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners.

Indigenous students pursuing post-secondary education, as well as for Indigenous post-secondary institutions for the design and delivery of post-secondary programming and community-based programming.

Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development

In the context of rapid economic, societal, and technological transformation, a highly skilled workforce is essential. The rapidly evolving labour market increasingly leads learners to pursue learning throughout their lives in order to respond to new demands. Across Canada, discussions about the future of education and work are ongoing, as well as ways to support populations, particularly more vulnerable groups who have been more affected by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, to be able to adapt and thrive. Canada's provinces and territories are working to deliver effective education, training, and employment programs and supports that provide or recognize the skills individuals need to participate fully in society and the labour market.

Adult learning and education (ALE) is a key pillar in this endeavour, and encompasses literacy and numeracy skills, digital literacy skills, pathways to higher academic or vocational programs, and an increasing embrace of lifelong learning. Education and training systems across Canada have embarked on ambitious systems reviews and redesigns of their ALE models to place evidence-based decision-making at the forefront, embedding data in assessing needs, designing programs, monitoring progress, and measuring outcomes, to enhance policy, programming, governance, financing, quality assurance, and accessibility equity and inclusion. This approach is particularly instrumental in efforts to address the needs of under-represented groups, to bridge the gaps in access, persistence, and outcomes for certain populations. Canada has also recently invested in supporting First Nations people on reserve who wish to return to high school in their communities and complete their high school education.