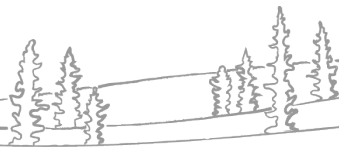




Indigenous Perspectives in NWT JK-12 Education



Schools and educators across the Northwest Territories (NWT) rely on two documents that incorporate the worldview and language of Indigenous people. They use these curriculums across all subjects, depending on their school and community:

- The Dene Kede Kindergarten to Grade 9 curriculum incorporates the language, culture, and the way in which five Dene nations view the world.
- The Inuuqatigiit Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum focuses on Inuit culture, heritage, and language.



“Culture is more than land skills. Culture is Dene community. Culture is the spiritual world of the Dene. And culture is the way of perceiving oneself.”

Fibbie Tatti, Former NWT Curriculum Development Coordinator, 1993

How are Indigenous perspectives integrated into the NWT curriculum?

- Students take part in hands-on activities and self-reflection to develop new skills, attitudes, or ways of thinking.
- Students are encouraged to nurture relationships with family, Elders, community, the land, themselves and the spiritual world.
- Students revisit familiar themes throughout their learning, with deeper, more complex understanding developing over time.
- Educators focus on the development of the whole person – physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

“All Northern students must have the opportunity to grow and develop as an NWT capable person. Students in the NWT must form intercultural understanding, respect, and value for both worldviews. All students benefit when they are ‘Strong Like Two People.’”

NWT JK-12 Indigenous Languages & Education Handbook, 2021

What impact does this have on students and schools?

Ensuring that Indigenous perspectives are included in education:

- makes space for multiple ways of learning and gets students engaged in learning
- values and celebrates the knowledge and gifts each community has to offer
- draws on the community and land for learning, with a focus on community-specific interests and needs
- welcomes and includes Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members, who provide valuable traditional, cultural, and language-based knowledge
- benefits all students, as an education firmly rooted in place leads to learning that is relevant, meaningful, and connected to one’s community and territory.

“Elders and community resource people may be used to help in teaching these understandings, but it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that the students are understanding how the stories and experiences provided by the Elders fit together.”

Dene Kede – Grade 8, 2003

Q&A:

Does incorporating Indigenous perspectives in education take time away from other learning?

No, Indigenized education is not something extra. It’s a way to make learning meaningful and engaging for students by connecting it directly to daily life in their community.

Do non-Indigenous students benefit from curriculum that includes Indigenous perspectives?

Yes, all students benefit when their learning is deeply rooted in people and place. It ensures that their studies are authentic, relevant, and connected to their daily lives.

What does Indigenized education mean? Is it just on-the-land learning?

No, Indigenized education is not limited to cultural teachings and on-the-land experiences. From art to science, it is incorporated across all content areas within all classrooms.

Does Indigenized education look the same across the NWT?

No, it reflects the diverse cultures and languages found across the territory and is tailored to the unique context of each community and the people who call it home.

Do only Indigenous educators include Indigenous perspectives in the classroom?

No, all educators should make Indigenous perspectives an important component of daily learning for students. Local Elders and Knowledge Keepers can add richness by sharing worldviews, traditional knowledge, and valuable first-hand experiences with students.

Contact information:

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