

## Indigeneity in H&PE

Ophea is a provincial subject association for Health and Physical Education (H&PE) in Ontario, Canada. We support all educators and school communities to understand issues related to healthy, active living and by advocating, partnering and providing resources and support. Ophea recognizes that the historical structures and systems still used within our sector have the potential to cause harm to many students. This is true for Indigenous students, as well for those who experience compounded marginalization based on the other intersecting identities they hold.

In Ontario, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students may be attending schools within the publicly funded education system, or they may be attending on reserve schools (that may be private, chartered, or federally funded). H&PE is arguably one of the subject areas that is least developed in terms of Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Throughout their educational journeys, it is very likely that Indigenous students will move in, out, and through both "systems". The publicly funded education system continues to prioritize settler colonial and Euro-centric ways of understanding H&PE, which have led to the destruction and fragmentation of Indigenous knowledge systems in our schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) and its Calls to Action have demonstrated the need to create culturally responsive policies, programs, and educational materials across the Education sector, especially in light of the myriad barriers Indigenous children and youth in schools face, as a result of colonization. Indigenous students frequently encounter barriers to participation in H&PE and sport due to cultural insensitivity, blatant discrimination, lack of representation, limited access to culturally relevant resources, financial, structural, and geographical challenges (e.g., distance, modes of transportation, timing).

As we work to create inclusive spaces that expand Indigenous student access to feelings of belonging in H&PE, we must acknowledge that representation matters deeply in all educational contexts. In conjunction with this, land-based learning, and learning rooted in cultural traditions and knowledge, is re-emerging as a form of reassertion and is foundational to Indigenous resurgence and decolonization. The valuation of land as a teacher, and the opportunity for embodied learning, when approached and offered by Indigenous Peoples for Indigenous Peoples, cannot be understated. To better understand and respond to Indigenous needs and priorities, H&PE should be viewed as part of an intimate, interconnected whole connected to broader Indigenous culture.

As we work to create inclusive spaces that expand student access to feelings of belonging in relation to their health, and physical education; it is our responsibility to acknowledge the multiplicity of ways of knowing and being that exist, and we must also acknowledge that our current colonial system is fraught with deficits and limitations. By centering the knowledges, perspectives and values of local Indigenous peoples, we are opening up space to unpack settler colonialism, making way for something new, that disrupts the ongoing repetition of harms.

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This statement was developed in collaboration with various interest holders, subject matter experts (including Indigenous youth with lived experience), and community partners.