

*the  
journey*

*begin*

# Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation

Continuing the Learning Journey

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## The Alberta Teachers' Association

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# Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation

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CONTINUING THE LEARNING JOURNEY



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## Preface

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For over 100 years, the Indian Residential School system operated in Canada. Over 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children attended residential schools, and many of them never returned home. Often underfunded and overcrowded, the schools were used as a tool of assimilation by the Canadian state and churches. Thousands of students suffered physical, emotional and sexual abuse while attending. The damages inflicted by residential schools continues to this day.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada provided an opportunity for residential school survivors, intergenerational survivors and communities to share their truths with regard to their experiences in the Indian Residential School system. At a TRC event in Edmonton on March 27, 2014, the Government of Canada made a commitment to “rebalancing the curriculum and to including First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives and experiences.”

In 2016, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)—along with representatives of the Government of Alberta, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) and other education organizations in Alberta—signed the Joint Commitment to Action (JCTA) to ensure that all K–12 teachers receive additional training related to First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories and cultures. The JCTA is part of an enduring commitment to respond to the TRC's (2015b) calls to action. This lifelong commitment requires the collective efforts of all education partners, including the commitment to foster meaningful relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders, Knowledge Keepers and communities to authentically advance reconciliation.

“Reconciliation” means the process and goal of creating societal change through a fundamental shift in thinking and attitudes, increasing intercultural understanding to build a better society through learning about First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives and experiences, including residential schools and treaties.

*Leadership Quality Standard, p 2*

In keeping with this commitment and consistent with its responsibilities to uphold high standards of professional practice, the ATA supported the recognition of the history, experiences, perspectives and insights of Indigenous Peoples in Alberta Education's (2020a, 2020b, 2020c) foundational documents establishing the professional expectations for Alberta's school leaders, superintendents and teachers. Effective September 1, 2019, these professional practice standards all include competencies to ensure that teachers and other education professionals have knowledge and



understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures and ways of knowing; residential schools and their legacy; treaties; and First Nations, Métis and Inuit experiences and perspectives, cultures, and contributions in historical and contemporary contexts.

As part of its commitment to the JCTA and the TRC calls to action, the ATA implemented the *Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation* professional learning project to support Alberta's teachers and school leaders in meeting the competency for developing and applying First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge.

The ATA continues to be committed to supporting the TRC calls to action and to supporting teachers and school leaders in implementing the Indigenous-focused competencies and indicators outlined in the *Leadership Quality Standard* and the *Teaching Quality Standard*. Advancing truth and reconciliation requires individual and collective commitment and is a process rooted in relationship and responsible action.

This research study to better understand the impacts of the *Walking Together* project was led by Melissa Purcell, executive staff officer, Indigenous Education, Professional Development, who has worked tirelessly and with deep personal commitment to promote understanding of reconciliation among ATA leaders, staff and members. A special note of thanks is due also to the researchers at the University of Alberta, to ATA staff and to the teachers who contributed their many voices through completing the survey and participating in the focus groups. We are also grateful for the dedication of the *Walking Together* consultants and the continued support from First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors. We appreciate all of your contributions and your commitment to supporting Alberta classrooms and schools in Indigenous education and reconciliation.

*Dennis Theobald*  
*Executive Secretary, Alberta Teachers' Association*



# The Walking Together Project

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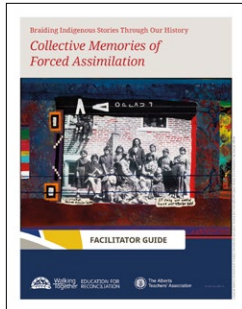
The ATA received grant funding through Alberta Education to implement the Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation professional learning project—a comprehensive program of ongoing professional learning. The primary goal of this professional learning project was to support all Alberta teachers and school leaders in meeting the competency for developing and applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit outlined in Alberta's *Teaching Quality Standard* and *Leadership Quality Standard*. The project was implemented from September 2016 to June 2019.

The Walking Together project supported the development and implementation of comprehensive and targeted resources designed to build understandings and shift the practices of teachers and school leaders with regard to developing and applying First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge. The project included the following activities:

- Coordinating and collaborating with key education partners—including First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and Métis and Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Treaty 8 representatives—in developing and implementing professional learning
- Developing professional learning resources in print and digital formats to support the delivery of professional learning experiences in English and French
- Providing professional learning through workshops, school-based professional development (PD) days, webinars, teachers' conventions, educate-the-educator sessions and participatory experientials (such as land-based learning, the KAIROS Blanket Exercise and culture camps)
- Collaborating with the NCTR to build capacity in the field through partnerships and networking with school authorities (provincial and federal)
- Establishing three regional advisory committees, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit community representatives, to support the development and delivery of PD that is responsive to the local context

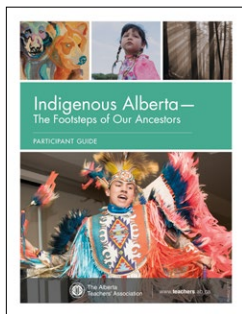
## WORKSHOPS

The workshops described here were developed through the Walking Together project. All of the workshops were designed to support the development of First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge. They were delivered at Walking Together gatherings and train-the-trainer events, numerous teachers' conventions, provincial and national conferences, and school and division learning opportunities, as requested.



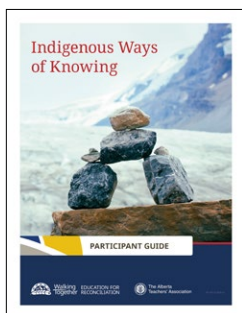
### Braiding Indigenous Stories Through Our History: Collective Memories of Forced Assimilation

Through storytelling, participants will explore the historical implications of forced assimilation in Canada. The perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and of the Crown are woven throughout this participatory workshop, providing a deeper understanding of the impacts of policies and legislation, and are contrasted with examples of resiliency. Participants will gain a better understanding of the historical and contemporary realities of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and learn about initiatives that contribute to reconciliation.



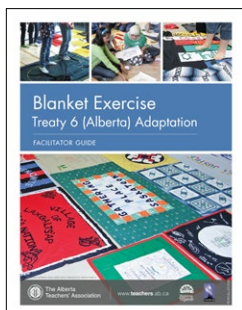
### Indigenous Alberta—the Footsteps of Our Ancestors

This workshop will introduce participants to the rich Indigenous cultural and linguistic diversity of Alberta. The topics include terminology related to identity, recognition of territory, and significant ancestral landscapes related to locations of celebrations and traditions that come to life through song and dance. Participants will also explore common myths and misconceptions and engage in a brief historical timeline.



### Indigenous Ways of Knowing

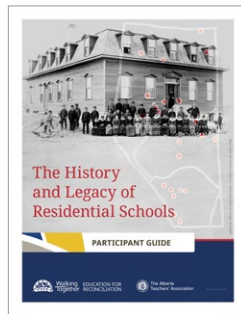
This workshop is designed to be an introduction to First Nations, Métis and Inuit world views, cultural beliefs and values. It is neither a comprehensive nor an exhaustive exploration of Indigenous ways of knowing but, rather, a series of focused conversation starters for groups of educators engaged in reconciliation. World views and ways of knowing are like stones thrown into the water from which other circles grow outward. Participants will gain an understanding and appreciation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples by learning about the diverse traditional and contemporary experiences unique to them.



### The Blanket Exercise

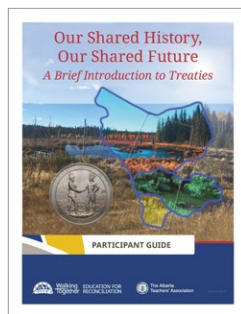
The Blanket Exercise is a participatory workshop in which educators will experience over 500 years of history by taking on the roles of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Standing on blankets that represent the land, they will walk through time and explore the impacts of colonization, treaty making and modern legislation. The Blanket Exercise concludes with a

facilitated debriefing in which participants discuss the experience as a group. By engaging participants on the emotional and intellectual levels, this workshop serves as a powerful tool for increasing empathy and understanding. Versions are available for Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Treaty 8.



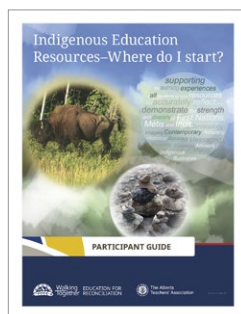
### The History and Legacy of Residential Schools

This workshop examines the history, impacts and legacy of residential schools, including the effects of intergenerational trauma. Tools, resources and strategies that contribute to the development of mutually respectful relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians will be explored. Participants will leave honouring the TRC calls to action and will make a professional and personal commitment to action. Also available in French.



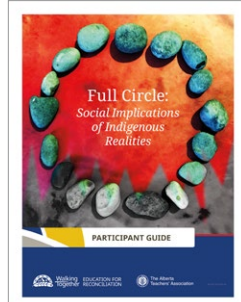
### Our Shared History, Our Shared Future: A Brief Introduction to Treaties

This introductory workshop will explore historical and contemporary information and resources relating to numbered treaties in Alberta. Participants will build their understanding of the acknowledgement of land and people, as well as our shared responsibilities to the land and to each other. Participants will engage in dialogue and reflect on their professional learning to build capacity in treaty education.



### Indigenous Education Resources—Where Do I Start?

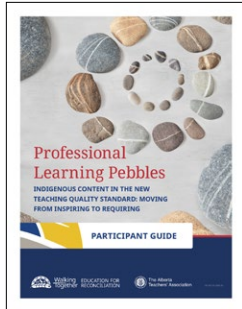
This session will support educators in using resources that accurately reflect and demonstrate the strength and diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Participants will learn about culturally responsive resources to increase their capacity in foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. In addition, they will leave with tools to consider for critically reviewing First Nations, Métis and Inuit resources for classroom and professional use.



### Full Circle: Social Implications of Indigenous Realities

This workshop will examine the core causes of intergenerational trauma; challenge common myths and misconceptions; and explore activities to foster effective relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, families and communities. Participants will explore assimilation strategies that have contributed to many current realities of Indigenous students, families and communities. They will gain an increased

understanding of the physical, mental, social and spiritual impacts and explore strength-based initiatives to contribute to the advancement of the reconciliation process.



### Moving from Inspiring to Requiring: Indigenous Content in the New Teaching Quality Standard

Alberta’s new *Teaching Quality Standard* requires all teachers to demonstrate foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples for the benefit of all students. Where should one start? In this session, participants will be introduced to short interactive activities designed to enhance their understanding of reconciliation, resources specifically produced to build their competence and confidence, and ideas about the many paths they can pursue on their professional Indigenous education learning journey.

### Additional Workshops

- Finding Our Way in Indigenous Education: Connecting Hearts and Minds
- Une histoire commune, un avenir à partager : Initiation aux traités
- The Sixties Scoop: Understanding Implications and Contributing Towards Reconciliation
- ᑕᐅ ᐃᐅ tapwewin: Dismantling Anti-Indigenous Racism
- A Call to Action for Advancing Indigenous Women in Education: Restoring Balance Through Truth, Justice and Reconciliation

## STEPPING STONES AND OTHER RESOURCES

Stepping Stones is a popular series of publications produced by the Walking Together project. The Stepping Stones resources are intended to support teachers on their learning journey to meet the Indigenous-focused competencies and standards in Alberta’s *Teaching Quality Standard* and *Leadership Quality Standard*. All of the resources in the series are available online ([www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca) > My ATA > Professional Development > Indigenous Education and Walking Together > Resources) and continue to be translated into French. The topics include the following:

- Terminology
- Alberta Métis settlements and agreements
- An introduction to the Inuit
- Numbered treaties in Alberta (Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Treaty 8)
- Forced relocation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada



- Elder Protocols
- First Nations traditional plants and uses
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit music and dance
- Indigenous education resources
- Indigenous linguistic diversity and revitalization
- Residential schools (First Nations, Métis and Inuit experiences)
- Métis Nation of Alberta
- Concepts and policies of assimilation
- The Sixties Scoop



**6** RESSOURCES EN ÉDUCATION AUTOCHTONE

## Stepping Stones

### INDIGENOUS EDUCATION RESOURCES

**Planning your learning journey**

What resources are available to support my professional learning goals related to developing and applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit to benefit all students?

**FIRST STEPS**

➤➤➤

➤➤➤

Walking Together EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION The Alberta Teachers' Association

**7** CONCEPTS ET POLITIQUES D'ASSIMILATION

## Stepping Stones

### CONCEPTS AND POLICIES OF ASSIMILATION

**Planning your learning journey**

What are some policies of assimilation that the Canadian government has enacted on Indigenous Peoples?

**FIRST STEPS**

➤➤➤

➤➤➤

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**6** RESSOURCES EN ÉDUCATION AUTOCHTONE

## Pierres d'assise

### RESSOURCES POUR L'ÉDUCATION AUTOCHTONE

**Planifier votre parcours d'apprentissage**

Quelles sont les ressources qui appuient mes objectifs d'apprentissage professionnels liés au développement et à l'application des connaissances fondamentales sur les Premières Nations, les Métis et les Inuits au profit de tous les élèves?

**PREMIERS PAS**

➤➤➤

➤➤➤

Walking Together EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION The Alberta Teachers' Association

**7** ASSIMILATION : CONCEPTS ET POLITIQUES

## Pierres d'assise

### ASSIMILATION : CONCEPTS ET POLITIQUES

**Planifier votre parcours d'apprentissage**

Quelles sont certaines des politiques d'assimilation que le gouvernement canadien a adoptées à l'égard des peuples autochtones?

**PREMIERS PAS**

➤➤➤

➤➤➤

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**18** THE SIXTIES SCOOP

## Stepping Stones

### THE SIXTIES SCOOP

**Planning your Learning Journey**

What is the Sixties Scoop and how can understanding its impacts contribute to reconciliation?

**FIRST STEPS**

➤➤➤

➤➤➤

Walking Together EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION The Alberta Teachers' Association

**18** RAFFLE DES ANNÉES 1960

## Pierres d'assise

### RAFFLE DES ANNÉES 1960

**Planifier votre parcours d'apprentissage**

Qu'est-ce que la rafle des années 1960 et comment le fait de comprendre ses répercussions peut-il contribuer au processus de réconciliation?

**PREMIERS PAS**

➤➤➤

➤➤➤

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Additional resources developed by the Walking Together consultants include the following:

- *Land acknowledgements.* The Walking Together team created land acknowledgements for Treaty 6, Treaty 7 and Treaty 8 and developed bookmarks and posters to support educators in acknowledging land and peoples across the province. These are available online in English and French ([www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca) > My ATA > Professional Development > Indigenous Education and Walking Together > Resources).
- *Map.* The *Acknowledging Land and People* map shows the approximate locations in Alberta of treaty areas, Métis Nation of Alberta regional zones and Métis settlements, as well as First Nations language groupings. This resource has been updated annually to ensure that the text and imagery are accurate and continues to serve as an entry point into viewing our relationship with the land and Indigenous Peoples.

## WALKING TOGETHER CONSULTANTS

The Walking Together consultants provided support across the province to teachers, principals, school staffs, superintendents and First Nations school authorities through delivering PD workshops; providing ongoing support in Indigenous education; and facilitating connections to local First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders, Knowledge Keepers and communities.

The Walking Together consultants fostered and maintained relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members from across the province. These relationships provided guidance and meaningful feedback on the workshops and resources, as well as ongoing support throughout the professional learning project.





## WALKING TOGETHER GATHERINGS

The Walking Together project hosted regional gatherings and train-the-trainer events to share newly developed workshops and resources and to provide updates on upcoming supports or initiatives. All participants received training and PD in the newly developed workshops and resources, as well as materials for facilitating the workshops.

These events also gave participants opportunities to network with colleagues and learn from local First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders and Knowledge Keepers.



## Methodology and Methods

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In 2018 and 2019, the ATA, in collaboration with researchers from the Community–University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families at the University of Alberta, conducted a study to evaluate and better understand the impacts of the Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation professional learning project.

Data was collected from teachers and school leaders to provide an update on the implementation of the Indigenous-focused competencies and indicators in Alberta's *Teaching Quality Standard* and *Leadership Quality Standard*, as supported by the Walking Together project.

This study used a mixed methods research approach to capture the experiences of Alberta teachers:

- In May 2019, participants from the 2019 Walking Together gatherings were invited to complete an online survey. The gatherings were held in Edmonton (138 participants), Calgary (52 participants) and Grande Prairie (27 participants). In total, 130 people completed the survey. The survey comprised a number of scale questions, as well as several qualitative questions intended to elicit in-depth comments.
- In spring 2019, the researchers conducted four in-person focus groups. Each focus group included ATA members from across the province and was semi-structured. The primary purpose of the focus groups was to discuss the Walking Together project. Specifically, the researchers were interested in gathering information about the participants' general perceptions of the workshops and resources and their feedback about the impact of those supports.

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents could skip questions or withdraw at any time before clicking the submit button. Participation in the focus groups was also voluntary. The survey and focus group questions have been included in the appendix to this report.

The researchers collected and analyzed the data, computed descriptive statistics for all scale questions, and performed a thematic qualitative analysis on the open-ended responses.

The results of these evaluation activities are outlined in the following section.

# Results

## SURVEY

### Demographics

Most of the survey respondents were experienced teachers, with 56 per cent of them having taught for 15 or more years. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of respondents' teaching experience.

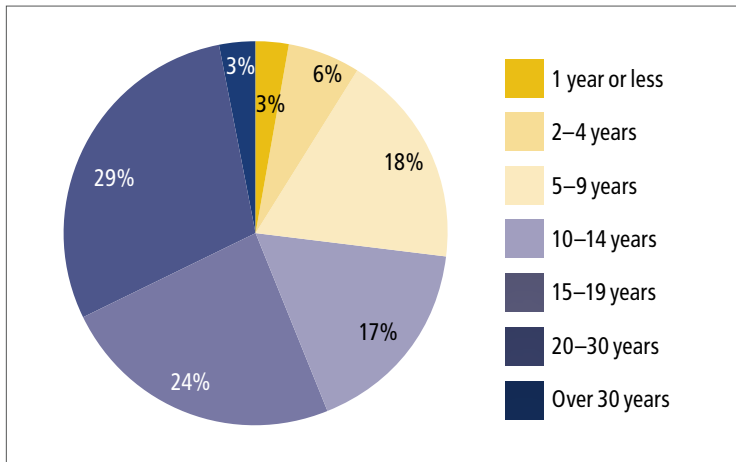


FIGURE 1. Years of teaching or leadership experience, including the current year ( $n = 123$ ).

Respondents were also asked to indicate their current assignment (that is, the grade level they were currently assigned to). The responses were relatively evenly spread among K-12 (see Figure 2). A significant number of respondents (39 per cent) indicated “other” and specified a range of other roles, including school counsellor, librarian, liaison and support staff.

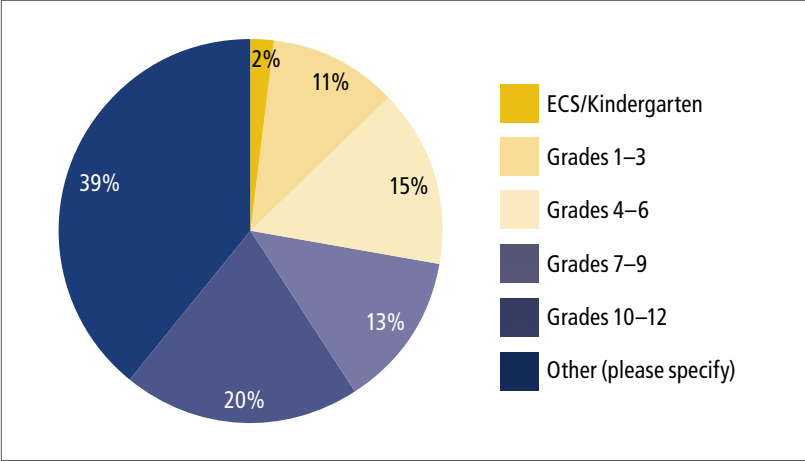


FIGURE 2. Current assignment (grade level) (n = 128).

In addition, participants were asked to indicate their primary assignment (such as classroom teacher or administrator). As shown in Figure 3, 50 per cent of the respondents were classroom teachers, and the remaining 50 per cent were administrators, had a combination of administrative and teaching duties, or had other assignments.

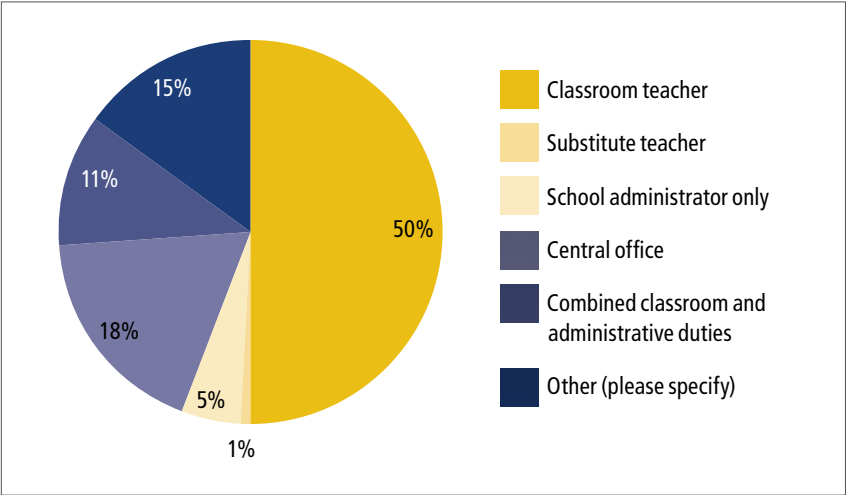


FIGURE 3. Primary current assignment (n = 129).

**Use and Impact of the Workshops**

As of June 2019, 69 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had started their professional learning journey in relation to the Walking Together project three years earlier or less (see Figure 4).

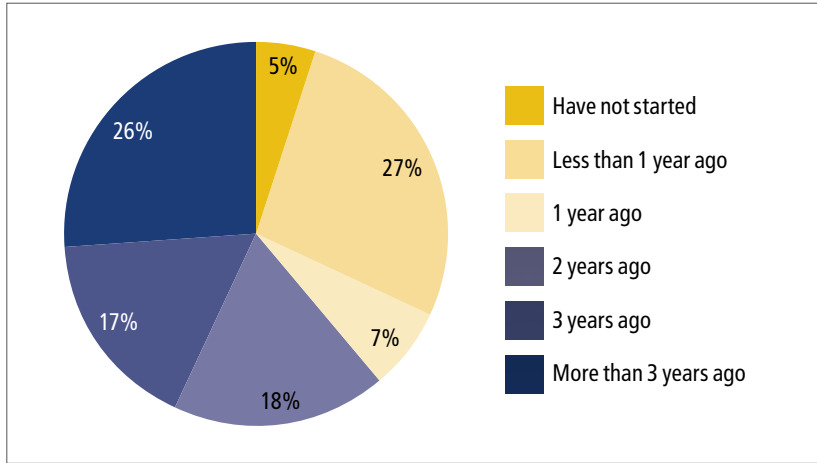


FIGURE 4. When did you begin your professional learning journey in relation to the Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation professional learning project? ( $n = 125$ )

In addition, 67 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had participated in Walking Together workshops (see Figure 5).

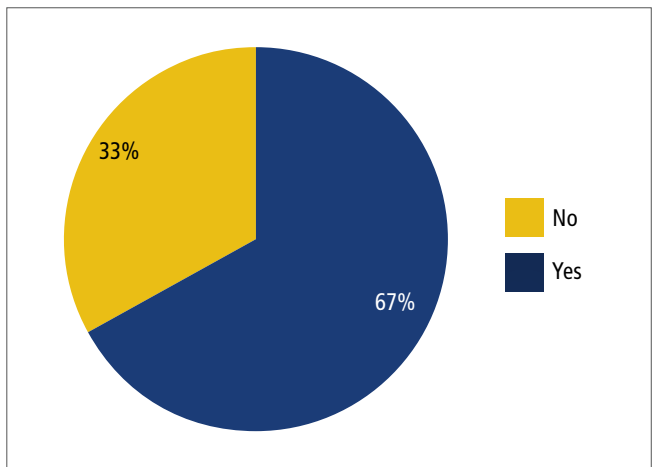


FIGURE 5. Have you attended any of the Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation workshops? ( $n = 124$ )

When the respondents were asked which workshops they had attended, they most often indicated the following three workshops:

- Our Shared History, Our Shared Future: A Brief Introduction to Treaties (58 per cent)
- Indigenous Education Resources—Where Do I Start? (58 per cent)
- Moving from Inspiring to Requiring: Indigenous Content in the New *Teaching Quality Standard* (58 per cent)

The least attended workshop was the French version of The History and Legacy of Residential Schools, with only 2.4 per cent attending. See Figure 6.

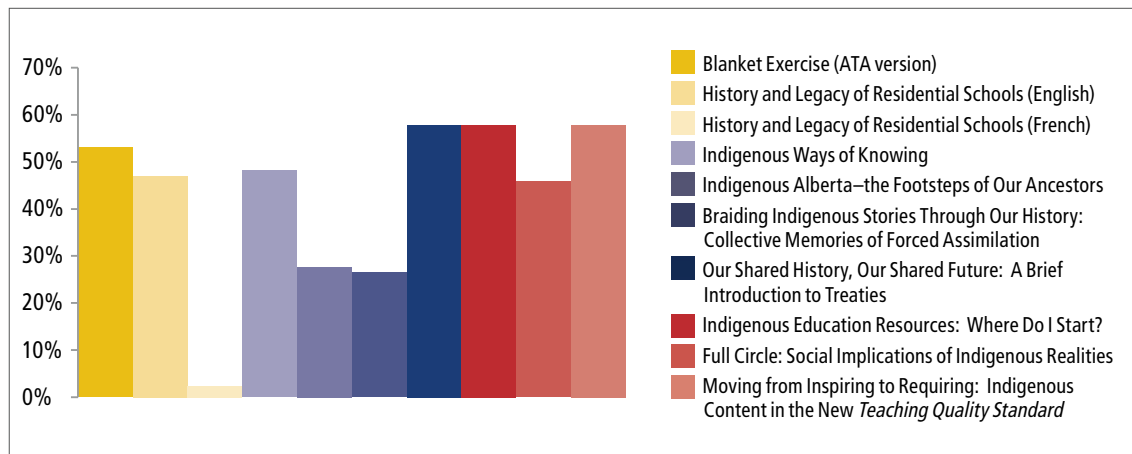


FIGURE 6. Which workshops have you attended (select all that apply)?

As shown in Figure 7, 62 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had used the Walking Together workshops to guide their facilitation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge.

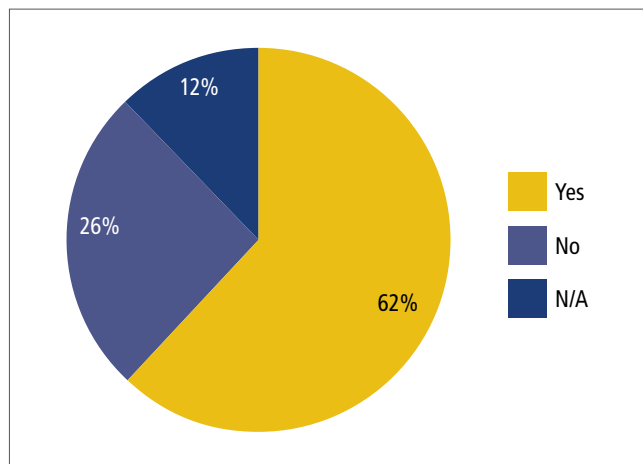


FIGURE 7. Have you used the Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation workshops to guide your facilitation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge? ( $n = 129$ )

When asked to indicate which workshops they had used to guide their facilitation of foundational knowledge, the respondents most frequently indicated the workshop The History and Legacy of Residential Schools (English version) (57 per cent). In addition, about half of the respondents indicated that they had used the Blanket Exercise (ATA version) (51 per cent) and Indigenous Ways of Knowing (51 per cent). See Figure 8.

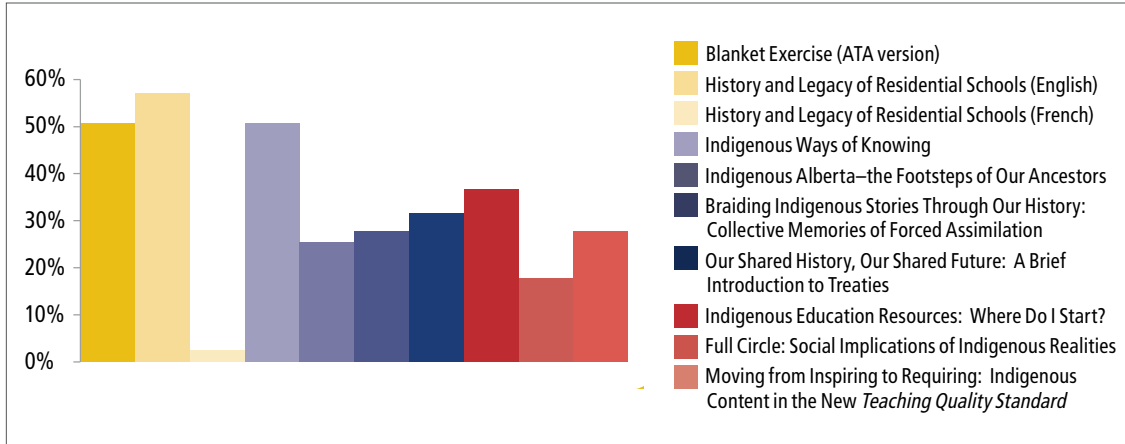


FIGURE 8. Which workshops have you used to guide your facilitation of foundational knowledge (select all that apply)?

Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which the Walking Together workshops had contributed to the development of their own foundational knowledge. Most respondents (67 per cent) reported that the workshops had contributed very much or extremely to their foundational knowledge. See Figure 9.

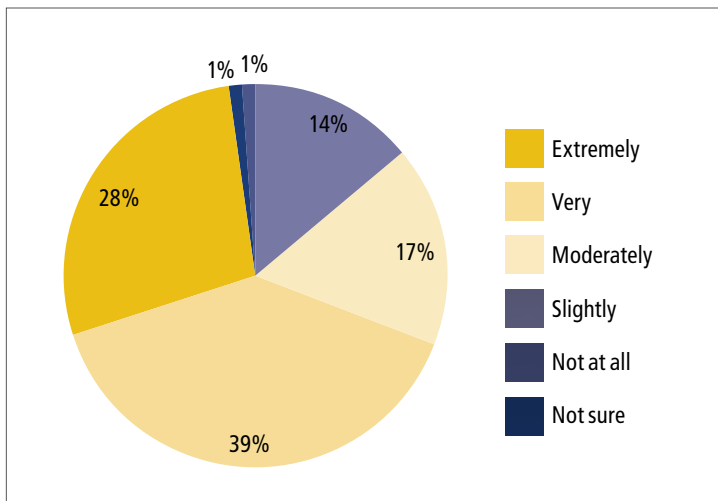


FIGURE 9. How has Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation contributed to developing your foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit? (n = 128)

Additionally, respondents were asked to estimate how much the Walking Together workshops had contributed to developing the foundational knowledge of others in their district. Many were not sure (29 per cent), but a substantial number estimated that the workshops had contributed very much or extremely (39 per cent) to others’ foundational knowledge. See Figure 10.



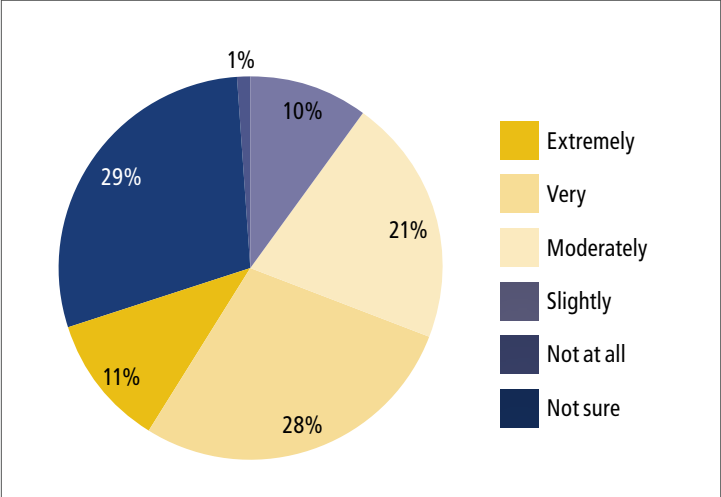


FIGURE 10. How has Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation contributed to developing foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit for others in your jurisdiction? (n = 129)

As Figure 11 shows, 17 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had trained other staff to facilitate the Walking Together workshops.

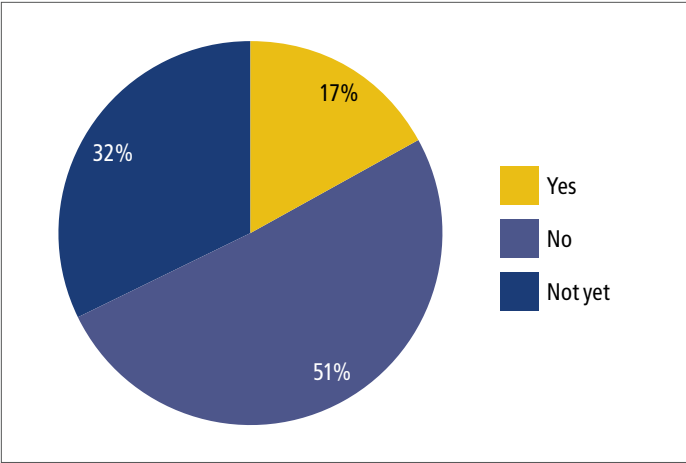


FIGURE 11. Have you trained other staff within your learning circles to facilitate these workshops? (n = 128)

In a follow-up question, respondents indicated which workshops they had trained others to facilitate. The most frequently indicated workshops were the Blanket Exercise (ATA version) (63.6 per cent), Indigenous Ways of Knowing (59.1 per cent), and The History and Legacy of Residential Schools (English version) (54.5 per cent). See Figure 12.

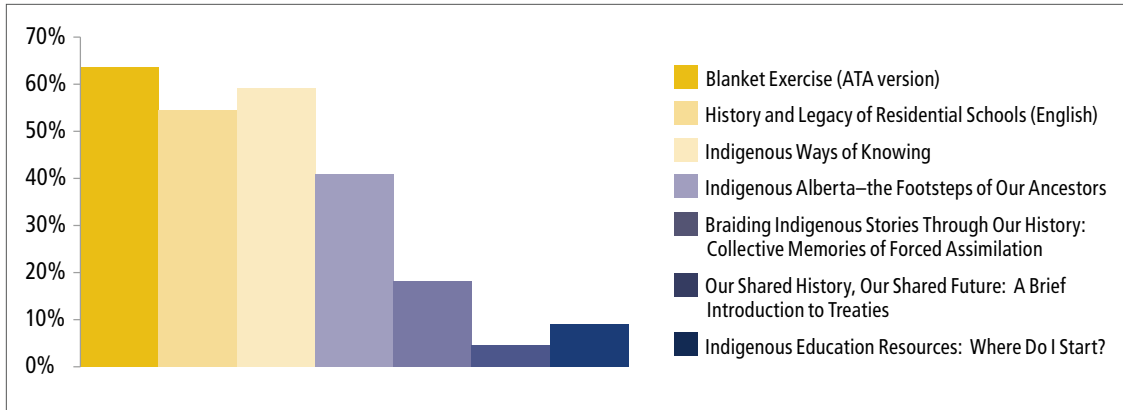


FIGURE 12. Which workshops have you trained others to facilitate (select all that apply)?

As shown in Figure 13, 64 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had modified the workshops to meet their school or jurisdiction needs.

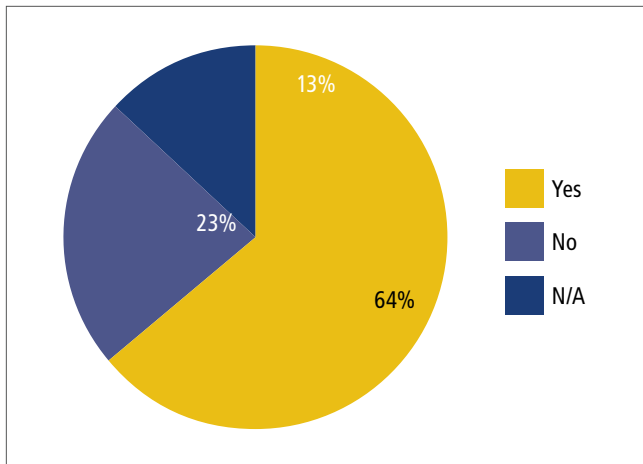


FIGURE 13. Have you modified the workshops to meet your school or jurisdiction needs? (n = 22)

Table 1 provides examples of how respondents modified the workshops and the reasons for those modifications. The two most common reasons were to include local content and to adjust the length of the material.

TABLE 1. Examples of Workshop Modifications

| Reason for the modification | Examples   |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Inclusion of local content  | <p>"We have adapted the Blanket Exercise to include more local context."</p> <p>"[We] consulted with Elders and historians from Maskwacis to localize content."</p> <p>"Local history of blanket exercise, pebbles workshops, local history."</p>  |
| Adjustments to length       | <p>"Not used in its entirety."</p> <p>"Often shortened them to meet tight schedules—sometimes only allowed 20–30 minutes, or split them into two parts."</p> <p>"The information provided was to support the need of the instruction and time limits."</p>   |
| Instructional needs         | <p>"We selected specific activities to do that would meet each of the 4 quadrants of the circle to guide our training day."</p> <p>"Picking and choosing appropriate activities to bring awareness to students in Grade 4, 5, and 6."</p> <p>"Taken activities from [Indigenous Ways of Knowing] and others to use during workshops and presentations! They are great activities!"</p> <p>"Reworked some activities to fit our school jurisdiction's needs; broke workshops down into stand-alone chunks to fit school needs."</p> |

As Figure 14 shows, most respondents (82 per cent) indicated that they had enhanced the Walking Together workshops by including the local context.

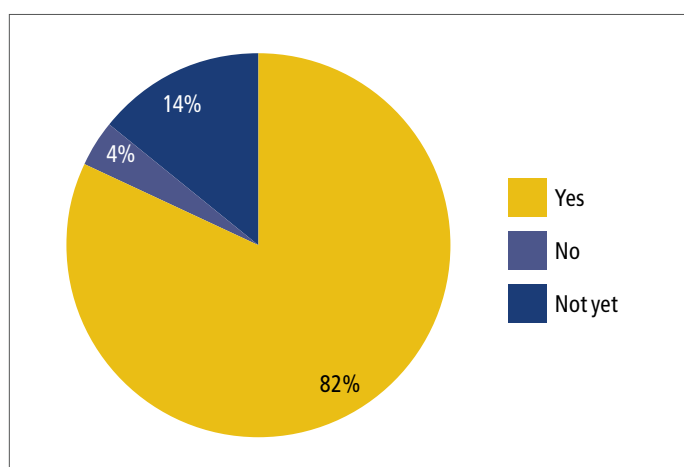
FIGURE 14. Have you enhanced the workshops by including local contexts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit? ( $n = 22$ )

Table 2 provides examples of enhancements respondents made to the workshops, including the inclusion of local examples, lived experience and other personal experiences.

TABLE 2. Examples of Workshop Enhancements

|   |
|---|
| "Examples of Trochu and Siksika Nation for Treaty 7 Blanket Exercise."  |
| "Having an Elder present as well as other Indigenous people."   |
| "Our local Elders added to the Blanket Exercise Kit with their own words that we turned into additional scrolls."   |
| "I've invited Elders as well as [First Nations, Métis and Inuit] instructors in our district to share their knowledge."   |
| "Stories from Elders, and community members."   |
| "Our district has modified the blanket exercise to reflect [the] local situation."  |
| "Use it in all the work I do as a consultant."  |
| "Stories about my family's experience in Residential School."   |
| "Added local history and context to all workshops when sharing with teaching staff; added local Elders' stories to concepts and themes."  |
| "Local elders, scripts from locals who went to residential school."   |
| "I taught Pythagoras in Grade 8 last year. I related that to the First Nations learning and understanding of Canoe making. I made a project based lesson of STEAM of that lesson and that was commended by the administration and the whole staff. I was made to present it at staff meeting where I shared my lesson, ideas and resources. First Nations resources are huge, wide and never ending. I love doing stories for everything possible." |
| "Talked about lived experience."  |
| "Local history of blanket exercise, pebbles workshops, local history."  |
| "By inviting local community members to talk about personal experiences."   |

### Use and Impact of the Stepping Stones Resources

As Figure 15 shows, 66 per cent of respondents had used the Stepping Stones resources.

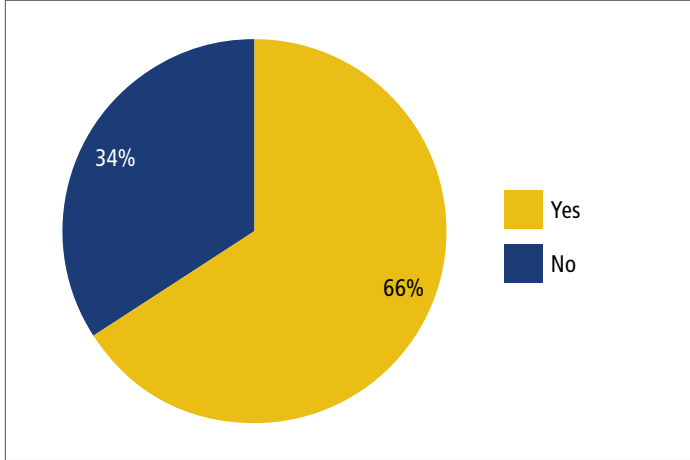


FIGURE 15. Have you used the Stepping Stones resources? (n = 128)

Of those who had used the Stepping Stones resources, 74 per cent felt that the resources were either very effective or extremely effective. See Figure 16.

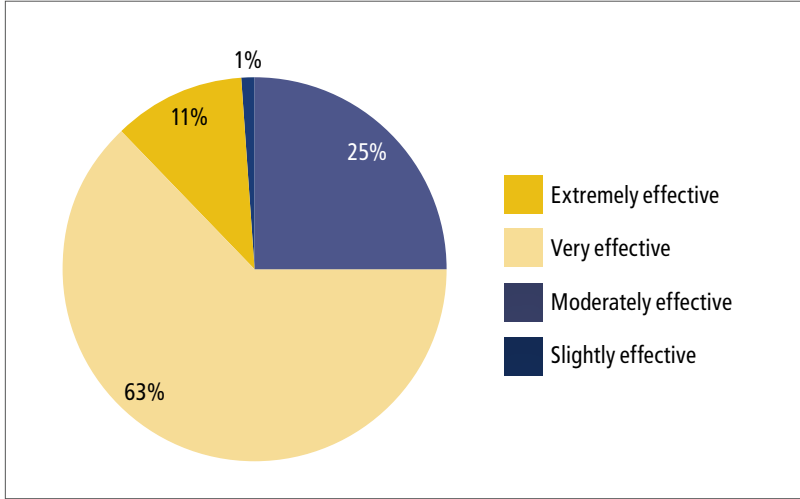


FIGURE 16. How effective were the Stepping Stones resources in supporting entry points into further learning? (n = 82)

### Support from the Walking Together Consultants

Respondents were asked to provide open-ended responses about the impact of the Walking Together consultants on their journey. The most frequently stated impact was increased knowledge. See Table 3 for more impacts and exemplary comments.

TABLE 3. How Has Accessing Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation Consultants Impacted Your Journey?

| Theme                         | Frequency | Exemplary comments  |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---|
| Increased knowledge           | 25        | "I have a much stronger foundation knowledge of [First Nations, Métis and Inuit]. I am better prepared to lead my staff."   |
| Provided resources            | 15        | "The website has great resources that are very well put together."  |
| Increased understanding       | 14        | "I have a greater understanding of how to support the new [ <i>Teaching Quality Standard</i> ] requirements with the sensitivity to the culture and way of life."   |
| Helped professional practice  | 13        | "It has made me more aware of the history of First Nations peoples in Canada, and specifically the context in which to understand and facilitate reconciliation going forward. It has also given me the tools to have my students better understand this history and their responsibilities to the Indigenous peoples of Canada in their futures."      |
| Provided support              | 11        | "New ideas and current issues have helped me to understand and incorporate teachings into my teachings."  |
| Served to inspire or motivate | 10        | "It was such a positive experience that I have been inspired to attend the Conference in Calgary this fall 2019."   |
| Increased confidence          | 6         | "Walking Together has provided direction, guidance and a voice of authority and expertise, so that our staff can be confident that we are heading in the same direction as the rest of the province and are aligned with the TRC and UNDRIP [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples], as well as elders and knowledge keepers." |
| Increased comfort             | 5         | "Their enthusiasm is motivational. I admit to feeling ill-prepared as to how to proceed, where to find resources and just overall comfort zone of addressing the topic(s) in a sensitive manner."   |

As Table 4 shows, when asked what they needed to further their journey in developing foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit, respondents indicated that what they needed most was access to resources, including classroom-based resources, resources to further their knowledge and other resources that could be used to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into the classroom. In addition, many indicated that they would appreciate more workshops and PD opportunities to

continue their journey. Though almost all of the comments were positive, at least one respondent expressed concern about the perceived one-sidedness of the research presented: "I think I would rather do my own research so I am not just getting one side. I felt leaving that the research was not well done and that there is a long way to go before I would consider going back."

TABLE 4. What Do You Need to Further Support Your Journey in Developing Foundational Knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit?

| Theme  | Frequency | Exemplary comments  |
|--|-----------|---|
| More resources   | 30        | "Class based, unit based resources ready to roll. I'd love to build some of those as I love to work in creating resources for teachers."  |
| PD opportunities and workshops                         | 22        | "Continued learning and consultation. I will look for more teaching/training workshops."  |
| Connections with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people | 13        | "It would be wonderful to have access to Elders to provide their story. Video resources both for training teachers as well as videos which would be appropriate for our students would be very beneficial." |
| More time  | 8         | "Time to educate myself."   |
| Connections with mentors or role models                | 6         | "A mentor, a friend to help guide or help me reflect on growth and identify opportunities for growth."  |

Respondents were also given an opportunity to share general feedback about the Walking Together project. Most responses were positive, and many expressed their gratitude for the resources and for the opportunity to attend the workshops. See Table 5.



TABLE 5. Do You Have Any Additional Comments?

| Theme                     | Frequency | Exemplary comments  |
|---------------------------|-----------|---|
| General positive feedback | 34        | "The Walking Together team was a fabulous group of women who worked hard to support all teachers in Alberta; I hope that their legacy and hard work lives on in [the] ATA and that the ATA continues to employ and support Indigenous educators to share their story and lived experience." |
| Gratitude                 | 25        | "Thank you for this crucially important work. We need to walk together into our future."  |
| Increased knowledge       | 7         | "I am new to Canada and recently began working on a programme that strives to improve health of indigenous communities. I find these events and organizations are a great resource for guidance and knowledge in my learning so that I can contribute more."                                |
| Increased understanding   | 3         | "I have thoroughly appreciated the knowledge and understanding that I have gained through this initiative. I hope that it will continue as this is necessary professional development."   |

## FOCUS GROUPS

The themes that emerged from the focus groups supported the themes that emerged from the survey.

### Increased Knowledge and Understanding

A primary theme that emerged from the focus groups was that participants found the Walking Together workshops and resources very useful for increasing knowledge and understanding. They shared anecdotes relating experiences they had had with others who lacked knowledge or who had distorted perspectives related to First Nations, Métis and Inuit issues. The discussions tended to revolve around how the workshops and resources could be used to educate others and to increase knowledge and understanding.

One participant noted, "I was surprised at some of the attitudes that I've encountered in people that I wouldn't have expected it [from], and it just kind of opened my eyes a little bit on some of the stuff that First Nations people have had to deal with."

### Increased Confidence

Another theme that emerged was that the Walking Together workshops and resources had increased participants' confidence in being able to teach their students about issues related to First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

One participant spoke of the confidence that comes from using the resources: "So just providing those links in those resources, giving them a little bit of courage to take that next step, because there's,

you know, that reluctance—that first step is the big step for most of them. That resource has been really, really helpful that way.”

### Meaningful Resources for the School and the Classroom

Participants also appreciated how the Walking Together workshops and resources provided useful and meaningful activities and ideas that could be incorporated into the school environment and their classroom teaching. This was important to them because it led to a much more authentic integration of First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge.

One participant shared, “We have some reps in our district that have come to our school, and they’ve done the blanket exercise with our staff. . . . They’ve come to our school and have done the blanket exercises with the Grade 7 [students]. So we try to assign, like, each grade to do one of the activities like the blanket exercise.”

## Key Findings

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Based on the survey responses and the focus group discussions, the following are the key findings of this study on the impacts of the Walking Together project.

### ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND MATERIALS TO SUPPORT THE ADVANCEMENT OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Many teachers and school leaders need more resources and materials to support the application of First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge in the classroom and to support the advancement of truth and reconciliation. Some have indicated confidence in the next steps for their learning journey, but others need further assistance in understanding where to begin. Additional supports are required, including examples of how to authentically integrate First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge into the school environment and classroom instruction.

Teachers and school leaders have requested the following types of resources:

- Curriculum-specific resources
- Vetted literacy resources
- Resources available in French
- Whole-school activities

One participant said, “I admit to feeling ill-prepared as to how to proceed, where to find resources and just overall comfort zone of addressing the topic(s) in a sensitive manner.” In contrast, another said, “I have developed the confidence to not only teach this information to my students, but also share it with my colleagues.”

A teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students.

Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as: . . .

- (c) using the programs of study to provide opportunities for all students to develop a knowledge and understanding of, and respect for, the histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences and contemporary contexts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit; and
- (d) supporting the learning experiences of all students by using resources that accurately reflect and demonstrate the strength and diversity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

*Teaching Quality Standard, p 6*

## COMMITMENT TO TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION THAT REQUIRES A CAREER-LONG LEARNING JOURNEY

Teachers and school leaders need more time to work with staff, students and the community to implement Indigenous education resources and supports, as well as more time to engage in land-based learning opportunities, PD workshops, courses and resources to increase understanding and awareness of the importance of Indigenous education. They require more experiences to increase their confidence and competence in developing First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge.

One participant noted the need for “more opportunities to learn more about what we can do as a teacher, staff and school to help students and the school body understand what is meant by reconciliation and why it’s an important part of our history.” Another said, “I would like to continue learning about Indigenous ways of knowing and history, and how can I apply [that] to my classroom.”

A teacher engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to improve teaching and learning.

Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as: . . .

- (e) enhancing understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit worldviews, cultural beliefs, languages and values.

*Teaching Quality Standard, p 4*

## FOSTERING AND MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT ELDERS, KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS AND COMMUNITIES

Many teachers and school leaders expressed an interest in fostering and maintaining relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders, Knowledge Keepers and communities to guide authentic learning experiences for students and staff. Some expressed concern about seeking out Elders or Knowledge Keepers in their community, because they lacked confidence in knowing where to begin.

As one participant said, “It would be wonderful to have access to Elders to provide their story.”

A teacher builds positive and productive relationships with students, parents/guardians, peers and others in the school and local community to support student learning.

Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as: . . .

(d) inviting First Nations, Métis and Inuit parents/guardians, Elders/knowledge keepers, cultural advisors and local community members into the school and classroom.

*Teaching Quality Standard, p 4*

## GUIDANCE AND MENTORING FROM FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT TEACHERS AND LEADERS

Access to First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers and leaders has increased confidence for many; however, more access is needed to facilitate guidance and opportunities for continued growth. Also, more support is needed to help teachers and school leaders contextualize First Nations, Métis and Inuit content to the local area in order to ensure authentic learning experiences.

Some participants indicated the need for a mentor to support teachers and school leaders in growing professionally and to support reflective practice and collaborative learning.

One participant suggested “something like a year long mentorship program for administrators that blends the Walking Together resources with authentic learning experiences such [as visiting] a place like Siksika, meeting with an elder, doing some land-based learning; all with leadership in mind.”

A teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students.

Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as:

- (a) understanding the historical, social, economic, and political implications of:
  - treaties and agreements with First Nations;
  - legislation and agreements negotiated with Métis; and
  - residential schools and their legacy;
- (b) supporting student achievement by engaging in collaborative, whole school approaches to capacity building in First Nations, Métis and Inuit education.

*Teaching Quality Standard, p 6*

A leader supports the school community in acquiring and applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit for the benefit of all students.

Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as: . . .

- (d) pursuing opportunities and engaging in practices to facilitate reconciliation within the school community.

*Leadership Quality Standard, p 4*

## Conclusion

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The Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation professional learning project has created a strong foundation of authentic and accurate resources, supports and workshops for teachers and school leaders in Alberta. These programs and supports will continue to work toward increasing confidence and competence in meeting the Indigenous-focused competencies and indicators in Alberta's *Teaching Quality Standard* and *Leadership Quality Standard*, which came into effect September 1, 2019.

Many of the teachers and school leaders who responded to the survey had only recently begun their professional learning in relation to the Walking Together project, with most having started their journey three years earlier or less. School divisions have a variety of needs, as do teachers and school leaders, in terms of their preparedness to meet the Indigenous-focused competencies and indicators in the *Teaching Quality Standard* and the *Leadership Quality Standard*. Some teachers and school leaders are just beginning their journey toward reconciliation, and others have been on this journey for many, many years.

All of the Walking Together PD resources and workshops have been designed as introductory materials to support this journey in Indigenous education and reconciliation. They are meant to provide entry points into further learning and to support both individual and collective learning needs in Indigenous education.

Many of the survey respondents indicated that they had modified the workshops to meet school or jurisdiction needs. These modifications included the inclusion of local content and adjustments to the length of the workshops. Most respondents also indicated that they had enhanced the workshops by including local examples, lived experiences and other personal experiences. The Walking Together resources and workshops are designed to be contextualized to the local area in order to maintain authenticity and accuracy.

Many respondents indicated that they had used the Walking Together workshops to guide their facilitation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge. Only 17 per cent of respondents indicated that they had used the workshops to train other staff. More time is needed to increase capacity in teachers and school leaders and to increase their confidence in facilitating professional learning for others.

With regard to the Stepping Stones resource series, many of the respondents had used the resources, and most of them felt that the resources were either very effective or extremely effective. Work continues in order to increase teachers' and school leaders' awareness of available resources through ATA teachers' conventions, conferences, online platforms and workshops.



## NEXT STEPS IN THE LEARNING JOURNEY

In 2019, the ATA's Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) approved the addition of 12 new Indigenous education PD facilitators to support implementation of the Indigenous-focused competencies in the *Teaching Quality Standard* and the *Leadership Quality Standard*. The Indigenous education PD facilitators assist teachers and school leaders in developing and maintaining relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Cultural Advisors, including following local cultural Protocols and sharing Indigenous education expertise with ATA members, locals and various subgroups. They also facilitate the ATA's Indigenous education and Walking Together workshops. In 2020, ARA approved a further expansion of the Indigenous education PD facilitator corps through the addition of six facilitators.

Fostering relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members has been a priority of the Walking Together project. The 2020 ARA approved the continuation of funding to support the Indigenous Advisory Circle and maintain relationships established through the project. The Indigenous Advisory Circle comprises 11 First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders and Knowledge Keepers who are committed to guiding and supporting the ATA in Indigenous education.

Many aspects of the Walking Together project will continue through ATA programs and supports, such as the Indigenous education PD facilitator corps and the ATA Indigenous Advisory Circle, as well as the ATA's Indigenous Education Council and Indigenous Education Committee.

### Key Needs

- More time, resources and supports are needed for teachers and school leaders to increase confidence and competency in the Indigenous-focused competencies and indicators in the *Teaching Quality Standard* and the *Leadership Quality Standard*.
- More time, resources and supports are needed for fostering and maintaining relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders, Knowledge Keepers, parents or guardians, and local community leaders.
- A curriculum is needed that reflects “opportunities for all students to develop a knowledge and understanding of, and respect for, the histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences and contemporary contexts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit” (Alberta Education 2020c, 6).

As the summary of the TRC's (2015a, 6–7) final report states,

Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.

We are not there yet. The relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples is not a mutually respectful one. But, we believe we can get there, and we believe we can maintain it.

## Appendix: Survey and Focus Group Questions

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### SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Years of teaching and/or leadership experience including the current year:

- 1 year or less                       2 to 4 years                       5 to 9 years
- 10 to 14 years                       15 to 19 years
- 20 to 30 years                       Over 30 years

2. Your current assignment is related exclusively or mainly to students in:

- ECS/Kindergarten                       Grades 1 to 3                       Grades 4 to 6
- Grades 7 to 9                       Grades 10 to 12
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Your primary current assignment:

- Classroom teacher                       Substitute teacher                       School administrator only
- Central office                       Combined classroom and administrative duties
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. School jurisdiction or band school authority:

\_\_\_\_\_

5. When did you begin your professional learning journey in relation to the Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation professional learning project?

- Have not started                       Less than 1 year ago                       1 year ago
- 2 years ago                       3 years ago                       More than 3 years ago

6. Have you attended any of the Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation workshops?

- Yes  No

7. Which workshops have you attended (select all that apply)?

- Blanket Exercise (ATA version)
- History and Legacy of Residential Schools (English)
- History and Legacy of Residential Schools (French)
- Indigenous Ways of Knowing
- Indigenous Alberta—the Footsteps of Our Ancestors
- Braiding Indigenous Stories Through Our History—Collective Memories of Forced Assimilation
- Our Shared History, Our Shared Future: A Brief Introduction to Treaties
- Indigenous Education Resources: Where Do I Start?
- Full Circle: Understanding Social Implications of Indigenous Realities
- Moving from Inspiring to Requiring: Indigenous Content in the New *Teaching Quality Standard*

8. Have you used the Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation workshops to guide your facilitation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit foundational knowledge?

- Yes  No  N/A

9. Which workshops have you used to guide your facilitation (select all that apply)?

- Blanket Exercise (ATA version)
- History and Legacy of Residential Schools (English)
- History and Legacy of Residential Schools (French)
- Indigenous Ways of Knowing
- Indigenous Alberta—the Footsteps of Our Ancestors
- Braiding Indigenous Stories Through Our History—Collective Memories of Forced Assimilation
- Our Shared History, Our Shared Future: A Brief Introduction to Treaties
- Indigenous Education Resources: Where Do I Start?
- Full Circle: Understanding Social Implications of Indigenous Realities
- Moving from Inspiring to Requiring: Indigenous Content in the New *Teaching Quality Standard*



15. Please provide an example

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16. How has Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation (i.e., workshops, resources, consultants) contributed to developing *your* foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit?

- |                                     |                                    |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all | <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly  | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very       | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure   |

17. How has Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation (i.e., workshops, resources, consultants) contributed to developing foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit for *others* in your jurisdiction?

- |                                     |                                    |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all | <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly  | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very       | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure   |

18. Have you used the Stepping Stones resources?

- |                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

19. How effective were the Stepping Stones resources in supporting entry points into further learning?

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not effective at all | <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly effective  | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderately effective |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very effective       | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely effective |   |

20. How has accessing Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation consultants impacted your journey?

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21. What do you need to further support your journey in developing foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit?

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22. Would you like to receive future updates via email?

Yes                       No

23. Do you have any additional comments?

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### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What advice can you provide to the Association as we continue to support teachers with Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation and Indigenous education?

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2. What are the strengths of Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation and Indigenous education?

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3. What are the challenges of Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation and Indigenous education?

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4. Additional comments:

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# Walking Together

EDUCATION FOR  
RECONCILIATION



The Alberta  
Teachers' Association