

==== 2021 ====

CANADIAN HISTORY
Report Card

Summary Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| INTRODUCTION | PG. 3 |
| METHODOLOGY | PG. 5 |
| OVERVIEW OF FINAL GRADES | PG. 7 |
| CROSS-CANADA TRENDS | PG. 7 |
| GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS | PG. 8 |
| Alberta | PG. 9 |
| British Columbia | PG. 10 |
| Manitoba | PG. 11 |
| New Brunswick | PG. 12 |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | PG. 13 |
| Northwest Territories | PG. 14 |
| Nova Scotia | PG. 15 |
| Nunavut | PG. 17 |
| Ontario | PG. 18 |
| Prince Edward Island | PG. 19 |
| Québec | PG. 21 |
| Saskatchewan | PG. 22 |
| Yukon | PG. 23 |

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Historica Canada's History Report Card assesses history curricula across Canada. We believe that history education should do more than teach young people about past events and people that shape the present. Strong history education should promote critical thinking, teach students to explore both the past and present and how they relate to their own experiences, empower students to confront difficult issues, provide history and context for the need for Indigenous reconciliation, and show how historical narratives and accounts are constructed.

An analysis of history and social studies curricula across the Canadian provinces and territories demonstrates that national history education can do all these things at once, but not necessarily equally well. In the 2021 Canadian History Report Card, we focus on ways in which provincial and territorial curricula try to balance these educational priorities. What parts of Canada's past are presented to students in the classroom, and how are they presented?

This report card assesses history curricula, which are not wholly reflective of what students learn in classrooms across the country. Teachers can interpret – and in many cases enrich – curricula in a variety of ways that differ from what curriculum writers envisioned. This report does not address how teachers use curricula in their classrooms, only the parameters set out by provincial and territorial curricula for learning, exploration, and inquiry into the Canadian past.

Historica Canada envisions a Canadian history curriculum that includes a balanced intersection of traditional political history and people's lived experiences, and a deep understanding of Indigeneity and land in the past and present. This vision of history education means students learn about the past by asking critical questions, exploring answers with a variety of media and sources – including those in their own communities – and sharing the results and reflections in a variety of ways. Curricula should also meet the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) [Calls to Action](#). It is our hope that curricula exceed these guidelines not only by including Indigenous peoples, but by teaching students about responsibility and reconciliation as well.

Curricula outline what is possible in history and social studies education and provide a vision of how a province wants its young citizens to understand the past. With this assessment, we examine what is possible with the curricula that determine the nature of Canadian history education for young people in Canada today and suggest ways to improve the study of the past for a better future.

This is the Summary Report. To read the Full Report, [click here](#).



INTRODUCTION

Changing expectations: A note on previous versions of this report card

With every version of this report card, our expectations have changed. The world has changed, and Canada with it. How we approach history education must change, too.

While certain standards have stayed the same since the last version of the report card, such as an emphasis on Historical Thinking Concepts in the skills sections, other standards have evolved to reflect the times.

At the time of publication of the 2015 Canadian History Report Card, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Actions had not yet been published. This year, we included a new category to grade provinces and territories on how well they adhered to specific Calls to Action regarding education (see the **Methodology** section). In 2020, the call for representation of Black voices — by no means a new request — was amplified, and brought an increased awareness of how stories of Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities are taught, if at all, in classrooms. As a result, this year's report card more closely scrutinizes the inclusion of diverse perspectives and narratives.

The inclusion of diverse narratives is not at the expense of traditional narratives told from a political,

military, or economic point of view. Confederation, for example, should still be taught. But so too should the perspectives of Indigenous peoples on Confederation. The Second World War should be taught. But so too should the experiences of Black, Asian, and Indigenous soldiers and the contributions of women. That is why this version of the Canadian History Report Card includes a category for scoring narrative balance in the content section, along with categories for "traditional" history, diverse history, and Indigenous representation.

In 2015, the skills section evaluated the incorporation of the Historical Thinking Concepts, research and writing, and communication. This year, we expanded our scope by considering the use of primary sources, whether the curricula accounted for differentiated assessment, and if students had opportunities to connect the content to themselves, their family and/or their community, along with critical inquiry and Historical Thinking Concepts. As a result, scores in the 2021 skills section may have changed significantly from 2015 results due to assessments based on a more complete picture.

Our expectations will continue to change. History education is not and should not be static. As our society changes, so will our classrooms.



METHODOLOGY

This report card assesses the mandatory coverage of Canadian history in grades 7 through 12 (Secondary I to V in Québec). Because students in the intermediate grades 7 through 9 have mandatory courses, all relevant courses were assessed. In grades 10 to 12, students often have options for learning Canadian history. In cases where students were mandated to take a history or social studies course but could choose from several options (e.g., a student must take one social studies credit and is given four courses to choose between), the optional courses were assessed individually and then averaged. More than 40 courses were assessed across Canada's 13 provinces and territories. Optional electives, as well as mandatory social studies courses with limited or no Canadian history content, were not assessed.

Because education is the responsibility of provincial and territorial governments, each province and territory was assessed individually. Some provinces and territories collaborate on curriculum development. In 1999, the four Atlantic provinces developed "Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social

Studies Curriculum" as a framework on which to base provincial social studies programs. New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island each mandate an "Empowerment" course in the intermediate grades. Nova Scotia also included this "Empowerment" course in its previous curriculum, but the new piloted curriculum, evaluated in this report, does not follow the framework. British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the three territories collaborated on the "Western and Northern Canadian Protocol," a guide for each to use while developing their own curricula. These collaborations demonstrate the potential for sharing pedagogical methodologies.

Each course was assessed equally in three areas: content, skills, and whether the course aligns with the TRC's Calls to Action, specifically Calls 62 to 65.¹ Additional points were awarded for each mandatory Canadian history-focused course. For example, a province that requires three mandatory Canadian history courses across grades 7 through 12 had its final score raised by 3 points.

Content

The content section focused on what students are expected to know, with points awarded in four areas:

1. **A traditional narrative** of Canadian history that emphasizes military, political, and economic history(ies).
2. The **lived experiences** of the Canadian past, emphasizing social and cultural histories, including histories of racialized peoples; women, gender, and sexuality; labour; migration; and dis/ability(ies).
3. The integration of **Indigeneity and the land** as key elements for understanding the past. We examined the extent to which resistance and resilience by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit were studied throughout Canadian history, or if they were covered only in pre-colonial and early colonial contexts. We also studied the extent to which land and environment were integrated as part of history – reflecting Indigenous perspectives on the past – or whether there was a disconnect between actions of humans and the land that they live on. This category was developed with an eye toward how we understand the past and our relations in the present.
4. **Balance and integration** of the above topics together. Were histories presented in the curriculum as if politics, experience, and land intersected in the past? Or were these histories presented as independent of one another?

¹ The TRC's [Calls to Action 62–65](#) include the "Education for Reconciliation" calls. These Calls demand K-12 curricula that cover residential schools, but also broader goals such as education that can build students' "capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action [2015], p. 7, 63.iii).

METHODOLOGY

In the content section, each of the four categories was given a score out of 10, for a total content score of 40. If there was a grade in which students chose a mandatory course from multiple options (e.g., grade 10 students had to choose one of three social studies courses), all of the Canadian history–focused options were evaluated and those marks were averaged for a grade total.

Skills

The skills category assessed what students are expected to do, with a focus on the instructional possibilities invited by the curriculum. In this category, we looked at four areas:

1. **Critical thinking and inquiry:** asking questions, examining evidence, looking for answers, and presenting conclusions. Many, but not all, provinces use the Historical Thinking Concepts to organize inquiry. The Historical Thinking Concepts include six benchmarks for engaging in this work, including establishing historical significance, using primary source evidence, identifying continuity and change, analyzing cause and consequence, using historical perspective, and recognizing the ethical dimension of history. In this review, we evaluated inquiry based in the Historical Thinking Concepts as well as inquiry not explicitly linked to the concepts. Inquiry was present in all provincial curricula, but it did not always result in critical examination of history.
2. **Primary sources:** opportunity for students to use and learn from primary sources or a range of sources that could provide multiple perspectives on the past.
3. **Differentiated instruction:** opportunity for students to learn from, and show their learning through, a variety of instructional and assessment strategies. This includes differentiated instruction, which allows for tailored teaching based on the needs and learning styles of students (e.g., for language-learner students).
4. **Reflection:** opportunity for students to learn from diverse family, community, or local histories.

As with the content scoring, each course was assessed out of 40 marks across the four skills categories. If a province offered more than one course in a particular grade, those marks were averaged for a grade total. The province's overall score in this area was the combined and averaged grade, per grade level, across the course offerings.

The TRC category was scored out of 10, assessing whether courses covered this content in ways that aligned with the spirit of the Calls to Action. As with the other categories, if a province offered more than one course in a particular grade, those marks were averaged for a grade total.

Under the **TRC Calls to Action category**, specifically Calls 62 to 65, each course was assessed on whether they covered:

1. **History of residential schools**
2. **Legacy of residential schools**
3. **Indigenous peoples' historical contributions to Canada**
4. **Indigenous peoples' contemporary contributions to Canada**
5. **Treaties**
6. **Indigenous knowledge**

To determine the province's overall grade, their scores for content, skills, and TRC Calls to Action were averaged, with additional points awarded for each mandatory course offered in the province.

Each province and territory was assigned one grade where anglophone and francophone curricula are identical or integrated. Provinces with different anglophone and francophone curricula were graded separately.

OVERVIEW OF FINAL GRADES

This report adhered to the following method of letter-grade equivalencies.

| Rank | Province/Territory | Grade | % |
|------|------------------------------------|-------|-----|
| 1 | Ontario | A | 85% |
| 2 | Nova Scotia (Anglophone) | B+ | 77% |
| 3 | Northwest Territories | B | 76% |
| T4 | British Columbia | B- | 72% |
| T4 | Yukon | B- | 72% |
| T4 | New Brunswick (Anglophone) | B- | 72% |
| 7 | Saskatchewan | C+ | 68% |
| T8 | New Brunswick (Francophone) | C | 66% |
| T8 | Nova Scotia (Francophone) | C | 66% |
| T10 | Manitoba | C | 65% |
| T10 | Prince Edward Island (Anglophone) | C | 65% |
| 12 | Newfoundland and Labrador | C | 64% |
| 13 | Prince Edward Island (Francophone) | C- | 61% |
| 14 | Nunavut | C- | 60% |
| 15 | Québec | D+ | 57% |
| 16 | Alberta | D- | 50% |

| Letter | Per cent score |
|--------|----------------|
| A+ | 90–100 |
| A | 85–90 |
| A- | 80–84 |
| B+ | 77–79 |
| B | 73–76 |
| B- | 70–72 |
| C+ | 67–69 |
| C | 63–66 |
| C- | 60–62 |
| D+ | 57–59 |
| D | 53–56 |
| D- | 50–52 |

CROSS-CANADA TRENDS

The Canadian History Report Card provides a grade for each province or territory, and highlights areas of strength and those that need improvement. While grades vary widely, trends are evident across the country.

- **Active emphasis on inquiry.** Curricula across the country emphasize the importance of having students ask and critically explore questions and communicate answers about the past as a way to understand history. Some curricula rely on primary sources more than others do, but all jurisdictions provide space for students and teachers to use a variety of resources in the study of the past.
- **Less emphasis on history and more emphasis on social studies.** Many more required courses fall under the category of interdisciplinary studies (history, geography, economics, and civics) compared with strictly history. This trend may support or undermine history education depending on the structure of the curricula. In some cases, a social studies blend provides greater space for students to explore the nuances of topics, themes, and issues, and how they intersect. In other cases, this integration leaves history behind, making it difficult, if not impossible, to count such courses as Canadian history courses. The best social studies courses across the country thoughtfully explore the relationship between, and integration of, history and social studies and show that they can result in a strong interdisciplinary understanding of the past.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Inquiry should inspire critical thinking.**

Even with an emphasis on inquiry, many curricula use language that encourages passive thinking and task completion rather than active and thoughtful exploration of a topic. In other words, not all inquiry is created equal. Inquiry can use leading questions as a way to prompt an established answer, or it can be harnessed to encourage students to organize and analyze conceptions about the Canadian past. Recognizing and reconciling how inquiry does not always result in critical, student-centric education is key to successful reassessment of what inquiry can achieve in history education.

- **Students need more opportunities to engage with local histories.**

The skills assessment asks whether students had opportunities to reflect on and bring their own histories into the study of Canada's past. This concept was the least prevalent among curricula across the board. Having students look at the experiences of their own neighbourhoods and communities is key to encouraging students to understand Canadian history in ways that apply to themselves. When personal connections are included, they are largely reserved for students in the intermediate grades, with high school students rarely given similar opportunities. Curricula should incorporate personal reflection at all grade levels.

- **History curricula need to reflect more diverse perspectives, including those of race, gender, and class.**

This is not a new critique and was noted as an area requiring improvement in the 2015 Canadian History Report Card. Studies of well-known individual women, immigrant groups, or labour movements are included in many provincial curricula, but there is room for improvement in exploring how marginalized and diverse groups shape and are shaped by past events and experiences. Curricula often separate lived experiences from political structures, which can undermine the understanding of how one's lived experiences can shape—or dismantle—political structures. People and their experiences need to be better integrated in our approach to studying the Canadian past so that young people can understand themselves in the Canadian present.

The 2021 Canadian History Report Card was researched and developed by Dr. Samantha Cutrara in close collaboration with the Historica Canada team. Dr. Cutrara, a history education strategist based in Toronto, has helped individuals and institutions mobilize history in ways that are meaningful, transformative, and inclusive for our diverse Canadian students. Under her leadership, the Archives of Ontario's First World War exhibit "Dear Sadie: Love, Lives, and Remembrance from Ontario's First World War" won the Ontario Museum Association's Excellence in Exhibits award in 2015. Dr. Cutrara's first book, *Transforming the Canadian History Classroom: Imagining a New 'We'*, was released by UBC Press in the fall of 2020.

This report was released in June 2021. Curriculum research was conducted between February 2020 and April 2021.

This report is presented by Historica Canada, the country's largest organization dedicated to enhancing awareness of Canada's history and citizenship. We offer programs that you can use to explore, learn, and reflect on our history, and what it means to be Canadian. For more information, visit historicacanada.ca.

This project was made possible by the generous sponsorship of the Wilson Foundation. The Wilson Foundation supports charitable projects and initiatives that strengthen and enrich Canada in education leadership, community, history, and heritage.

Describe

Across grades 7–12, Alberta has only one course focused specifically on Canadian history: the grade 7 course “Canada: Origins, Histories and Movement of Peoples.” Alberta also offers a grade 9 course, “Canada: Opportunities and Challenges,” but it is a social studies course, and the history content cannot be assessed on its own. This does not exclude the possibility that more history is taught in grades 7–12, but it is not offered explicitly as history. The Historical Thinking Concepts are featured in all curricula, which means teachers can, and are even encouraged to, include more historical content in courses that are not explicitly historical.

For this assessment, only the grade 7 curriculum was reviewed.

Quick Assessment

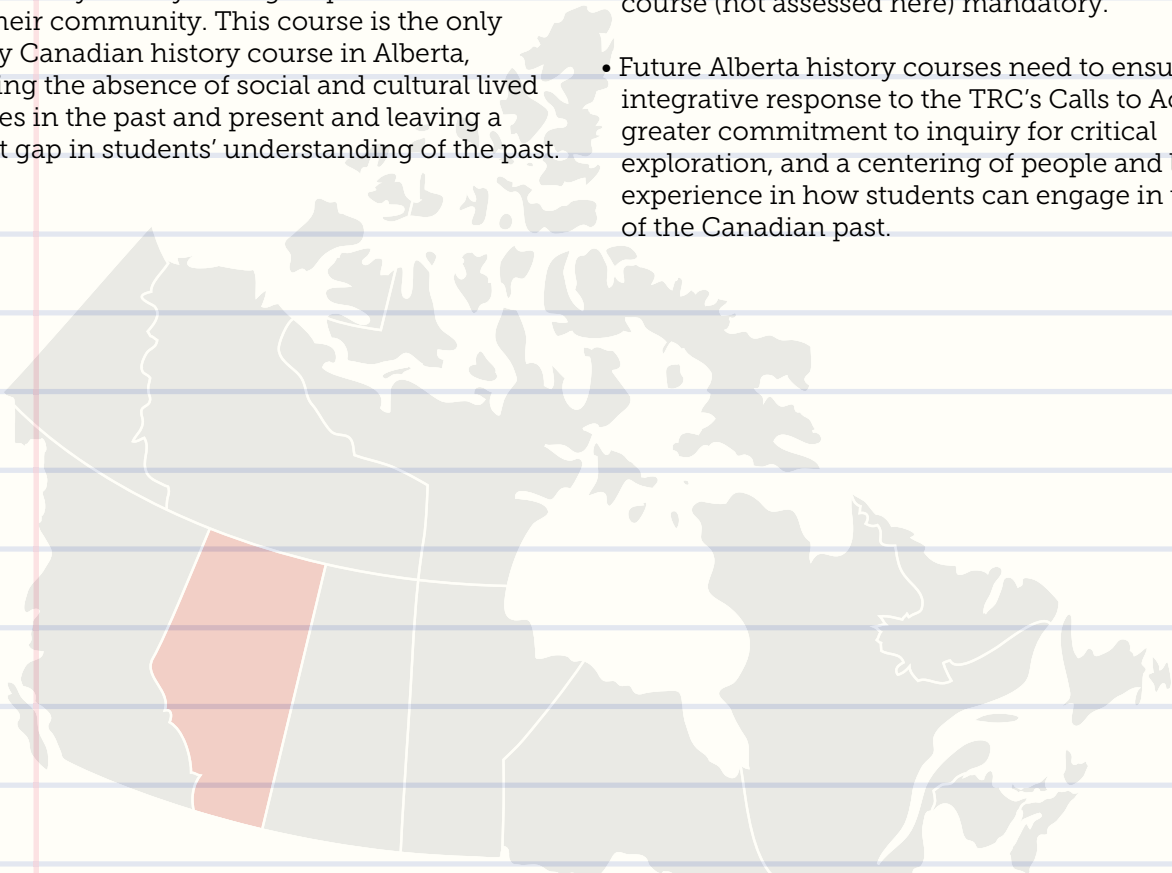
“Canada: Origins, Histories and Movement of Peoples” is a traditional curriculum that focuses on Confederation as the origin of contemporary Canada at the expense of diverse narratives and perspectives. While inquiry is built into the curriculum, the key learning opportunities are based on the traditional political story of Canada and leave little room for students to study history through a personal lens or through their community. This course is the only mandatory Canadian history course in Alberta, exacerbating the absence of social and cultural lived experiences in the past and present and leaving a significant gap in students’ understanding of the past.

Strengths

- Alberta has a distinct message, and its clearly indicated goal of “knowing and appreciating” Confederation is explicitly achieved in this course.
- In Alberta, skills and processes are given a clear, albeit separate, thread in this curriculum.
- Historical Thinking Concepts are present in many of Alberta’s social studies and humanities courses, giving teachers opportunities to incorporate historical content into a range of courses, not limited solely to history courses.

Recommendations

- Alberta’s curriculum needs to evolve to include more diversity in both content and pedagogy. The curriculum’s traditional coverage needs to be overhauled to include lived experiences, diverse histories, and more critical thinking.
- The province’s curricula would be improved by adding more and better content, particularly by mandating critical, inquiry-focused Canadian history in higher grades. They would benefit by making the optional Western Canadian History 20 course (not assessed here) mandatory.
- Future Alberta history courses need to ensure an integrative response to the TRC’s Calls to Action, a greater commitment to inquiry for critical exploration, and a centering of people and lived experience in how students can engage in the study of the Canadian past.



Describe

British Columbia has two required courses across grades 7–12 that include Canadian history. The first is a grade 9 course that covers 1750–1919, although the curriculum is not specifically centred on Canada. In grade 10, students take “Canada and the World: 1914 to the Present,” which is more Canada-focused.

For this assessment, the grades 9 and 10 curricula were reviewed.

Quick Assessment

British Columbia’s curriculum was revised between 2016 and 2018. The grades 9 and 10 courses are both organized with “Big Ideas” and standards that outline what students are expected to do and learn. “Big Ideas” encompass overarching historical and political themes, which shape the competencies and content that follow. The “knowing” (content) element is structured so that students engage in inquiry to explore the themes of the Big Ideas. The content is presented thematically rather than chronologically, making it easier to engage in critical inquiry of the past rather than arriving at pre-determined responses, as is the case in some provincial curricula. The content standards are relatively open and accompanied by suggestions on how teachers can meet the objectives.

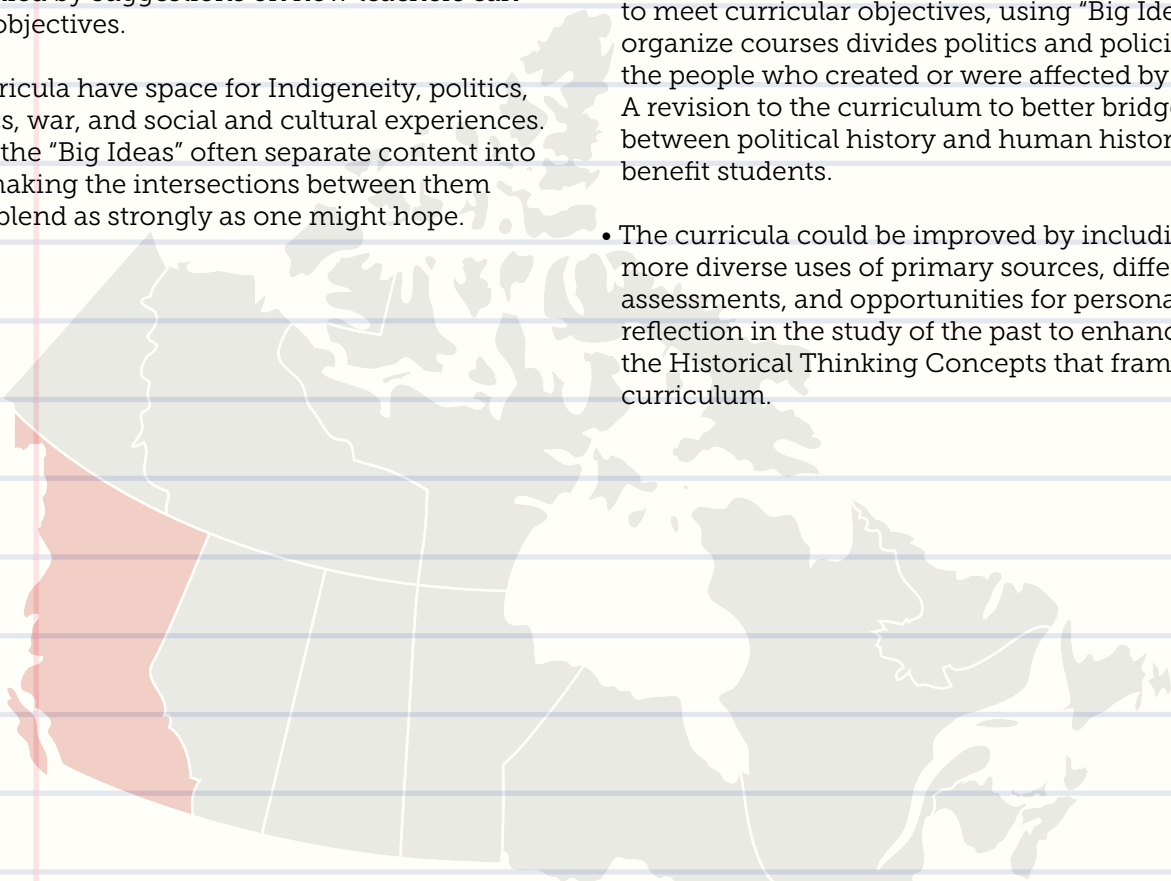
These curricula have space for Indigeneity, politics, economics, war, and social and cultural experiences. However, the “Big Ideas” often separate content into themes, making the intersections between them harder to blend as strongly as one might hope.

Strengths

- British Columbia’s curricula are clear, straight to the point, and give teachers a variety of ways to meet curriculum objectives. This provides space for a wide variety of historical experiences, including Indigeneity, politics, economics, war, and social and cultural experiences.
- The blending of Canadian history into a transnational context in the grade 9 course is an interesting way for students to learn about the past as it allows them to contextualize events and themes.
- The scaffolding of social studies curricula from K–12 is done well. While British Columbia only mandates two Canadian history courses at the intermediate and senior levels, students are taught Canadian history in elementary classes.
- The curriculum is designed around curricular competencies that build critical thinking skills, rather than just teaching content.

Recommendations

- While British Columbia’s social studies curricula provide many thematic content options for teachers to meet curricular objectives, using “Big Ideas” to organize courses divides politics and policies from the people who created or were affected by them. A revision to the curriculum to better bridge the gap between political history and human history would benefit students.
- The curricula could be improved by including more diverse uses of primary sources, differentiated assessments, and opportunities for personal reflection in the study of the past to enhance the Historical Thinking Concepts that frame the curriculum.



Describe

Manitoba requires only one Canadian history-focused class from grades 7–12: the grade 11 “History of Canada” course, launched in 2014. While there is a mandatory grade 9 course, “Canada in the Contemporary World,” it is a social studies course with only one area focused on history and therefore was not reviewed here.

For this assessment, only the grade 11 course was reviewed.

Quick Assessment

Manitoba has put great effort into its grade 11 course. The curriculum is designed in an engaging manner: in full colour, with numerous pictures, and an accompanying poster. This suggests the curriculum can be hung in the classroom, making the learning objectives clear to teachers and students. The Historical Thinking Concepts are explicitly integrated. The course includes examples of museums, archives, articles, and exhibits that teachers and students can, and should, use to study history.

However, with only one explicit history course across the intermediate and secondary grades, that one course is responsible for covering all of Canadian history. With such a burden, the curriculum reads as a traditional exploration of Canada’s past and the content contrasts starkly with the way the curriculum is presented.

Strengths

- The appearance of Manitoba’s grade 11 curriculum, with graphics and a poster-like design, suggests that teachers can post the document in a classroom and invite students to understand the curricular journey together. This invitation for seeing and reading the curriculum is a strength for a greater democratization of learning.
- Manitoba has a strong commitment to inquiry and primary sources, particularly through the Historical Thinking Concepts.

- The curriculum provides numerous examples of museums, archives, articles, and exhibits that teachers and students could, and should, use to engage in the study of history.
- Organizing the curriculum around questions, experiences, and themes creates an investigative quality to the curriculum that has pedagogical potential for both teachers and students.

Recommendations

- Manitoba should add more Canadian history to the classroom in grades 7 through 10 to achieve a more thorough coverage of Canadian history. The one mandatory grade 11 course carries the burden of having to cover everything, resulting in a content-heavy curriculum with less time for inquiry.
- Some of the essential questions that guide each unit are leading questions that do not allow for the type of critical engagement that a focus on Historical Thinking Concepts promises. This curriculum could be strengthened by making the essential questions that frame each cluster more exploratory.
- Adding an essential question that references the social and cultural experiences of people and the ways they affected and were affected by the politics of the past would integrate the experiences of people into the history of Canada. This integration could also provide opportunities for students to draw on their own family and community histories as evidence for the different periods of the past.

Describe

Anglophone: New Brunswick covers Canadian history-focused content in grades 7–12. Along with other Atlantic provinces, New Brunswick uses the Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum framework (1999) as a base for its intermediate social studies courses; in particular, for the grade 7 “Empowerment” course and the grade 8 “Atlantic Canada in the Global Community” course. The grade 9 course “Canadian Identities” was revised in 2020. For this assessment, grades 7, 8, and 9 curricula were reviewed.

Francophone: The only required Canadian history content in the francophone system is the grade 11 *Histoire du Canada* course, assessed here.

Quick Assessment

Anglophone: The mandatory New Brunswick courses teach Canadian history only within a social studies context. In grade 7, Canadian history is covered under the theme of empowerment; in grade 8, the theme is Atlantic Canada in the world; and in grade 9, the theme is identity. While an interdisciplinary approach to learning about the past can result in some interesting ways to explore history and its effects, the Canadian history content gets lost in these courses. This leaves students without a clear historical foundation for understanding contemporary Canada.

Francophone: The content of the grade 11 history course is largely focused on traditional history, although the course does integrate diverse primary sources. However, as it is the only mandatory history course, there is not enough space to explore more nuanced narratives.

Strengths

- **Anglophone**
 - There is a strong interdisciplinary and inquiry focus across New Brunswick’s anglophone courses.
 - All three courses provide opportunities for students to reflect on and learn from their own communities.
 - The list of websites included in the grade 9 curriculum is a helpful resource for a range of lesson plans, content, and instructional activities that other provinces would benefit from including.

- **Francophone**

- The grade 11 history course does an effective job of integrating diverse primary sources into the curricula.

Recommendations

- **Anglophone**

- New Brunswick can create more opportunities for students to learn Canadian history in more critical ways. The social studies grade 8 and 9 courses in particular miss the opportunity to critically engage with the past, even through an interdisciplinary lens.
- New Brunswick should mandate a Canadian history course for anglophone students in high school and ensure that it is updated and reflective of Canada’s diverse population and the TRC’s Calls to Action.

- **Francophone**

- The New Brunswick francophone system has only one mandated Canadian history course across intermediate and secondary levels. The province would benefit by adding further mandatory content at the lower level to better prepare students for the grade 11 course.
- The grade 11 course focuses on a traditional grand narrative of Canadian history, with elements of world history. The course attempts to cover a broad swath of history, but as the only mandated course, misses out on much. This could be addressed by requiring more history courses in grades 7–10 for francophone students, allowing for the inclusion of more regional history and opportunities to connect the content to students’ communities.
- Both the anglophone and francophone systems would benefit from working with Indigenous peoples in the Atlantic region to revise the approach to understanding place and create space to better integrate Indigenous worldviews into the focus on historical geography.

Newfoundland & Labrador

FINAL GRADE: 64% | C

Describe

Canadian history content is taught in Newfoundland and Labrador in grades 7, 8, and 9. As do the other Atlantic provinces, the Newfoundland and Labrador curricula draw on the Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum framework (1999) for a grade 7 “Empowerment” course and grade 9 social studies course, which covers 20th-century Canada. The grade 8 course focuses specifically on Newfoundland and Labrador history from the 1800s on. While there are social studies courses in high school, none are devoted to Canadian history.

For this assessment, the grades 7, 8, and 9 curricula were reviewed.

Quick Assessment

Newfoundland and Labrador’s grade 7 curriculum stands above the later grades, with a more balanced approach to content and a stronger use of inquiry and primary sources. The curricula for the grades 8 and 9 courses emphasize traditional narratives related to politics, economics, and military history, with little attention paid to social history or Indigenous experiences. The way that Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador are presented as constants in these curricula leaves little room to challenge the traditional narratives, nor does it weave histories that focus on ethnic diversity or Indigeneity through the curriculum consistently.

Strengths

- Newfoundland and Labrador has an interesting course structure that begins with a focus on the individual (grade 7), then proceeds to the province (grade 8), and finishes with the nation (grade 9). Each course is an interdisciplinary and thematic exploration of Canada and the people who live there.
- The approach to inquiry invites student reflection on the past and community, which is important as students come to understand Canada through a micro- to macro-progression.
- The province’s courses cover much of the Canadian past across the three grades.

Recommendations

- These curricula can be improved by giving more attention to the regional, interdisciplinary, and identity-based histories that are already included.
- All three courses offer a fairly traditional approach to the Canadian past and would benefit from an update that better integrates lived experiences and Indigeneity.
- Newfoundland and Labrador can strengthen its curricula by mandating a Canadian history course at the secondary level.
- Newfoundland and Labrador should broaden the scope of inquiry skills so that students move beyond simply “explaining” and “examining,” two verbs used frequently in the curriculum, in favour of critical thinking.



Northwest Territories²

FINAL GRADE: 76% | B

Describe

The Northwest Territories social studies curriculum is based on the frameworks produced through the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol in the early 1990s for curricula in Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. The grade 9 course “The Growth of Canada” expands on grade 7’s “Circumpolar World” (a mix of geography and current events) and includes Canadian history.

The Northwest Territories’ high school social studies curriculum follows Alberta’s standards. As in Alberta, Historical Thinking Concepts are featured in all the social studies curricula, providing teachers with the opportunity to include more historical content in courses that are not explicitly history.

In 2015, the Northwest Territories introduced a new grade 10 course, “Northern Studies 10: Northern Homeland,” designed outside the collaborative Protocol.

For this assessment, the grade 9 and the grade 10 curricula were reviewed.

Quick Assessment

The required grade 9 history course is an outdated and traditional reading of Canadian history, and a poor reflection of content that Northwest Territories students need to understand themselves and their place in the North and in Canada.

However, the new grade 10 course is an integrated and personal exploration of the past and its influence on the present. This course reflects a promising new direction for the study of the past in Canada.

Strengths

- The new grade 10 Northern studies course is an exciting and fresh framing of history and reflects a positive new approach for the study of the past.
- The guiding questions for each unit in the grade 10 Northern studies course ensure that inquiry is used as a process for understanding the past, not as a way to reach a predetermined conclusion. Other provinces would benefit from adopting this approach to inquiry.

- The curricula include outcomes related to values and attitudes, as well as knowledge and understanding. Both sets of outcomes ensure an understanding of, and empathy toward, the past and its present-day legacies.
- The grade 10 course includes a practicum during which students develop a “talent” with supervision and mentorship from a community member, Elder, and/or knowledge keeper. This element of the curriculum develops young people’s continuity of the past into the future and helps them build individual capability and connection with tradition. This approach encourages integrated and active learning from and with the past.

Recommendations

- While the grade 10 course provides a fresh approach to the study of Canadian history, the grade 9 course can be greatly improved. Currently based on a draft of Alberta’s 1993 curriculum, it is heavy on traditional Canadian history narratives and lacks many newer pedagogical techniques and approaches. As such, the grade 9 course omits the history of residential schools and should be revised to incorporate the TRC’s Calls to Action.
- The grade 9 curriculum should be strengthened by providing students with opportunities to make community connections, as found in the grade 10 course.

²In April 2021, media reports indicated that the Northwest Territories government is re-evaluating whether to continue using Alberta’s curricula as the basis for their own, or if they will look elsewhere for source material. They will decide whether to continue using the Alberta curriculum in summer 2021. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nwt-curriculum-renewal-territory-weighs-options-1.5988171>

Describe

Nova Scotia is going through a curriculum renewal, with curricula for grades 7 and 8 courses piloted for the 2019–2020 school year.³ The anglophone grade 11 courses were all updated within the last five years and the grade 11 *Histoire du Canada* course was updated in 2020–2021.

Anglophone: Nova Scotia mandates Canadian history-focused social studies courses in grades 7 and 8. In grade 11, students have to take one of five Canadian history courses: African Canadian Studies 11, Canadian History 11, Gaelic Studies 11, *Études acadiennes* 11⁴, or Mi'kmaw Studies 11. For this assessment, the piloted grades 7 and 8 curricula along with all five grade 11 courses were evaluated.

Francophone: Francophone students in Nova Scotia must take one of five grade 11 Canadian history course options.⁵ However, only three of those courses are offered in French; the other two are available but must be taken in English. African Canadian Studies 11, Gaelic Studies 11, *Études acadiennes* 11, and Mi'kmaw Studies 11 are the same courses as those offered to Anglophone students. *Histoire du Canada* 11, the French-language equivalent of Canadian History 11, is similar to the English version, but requires fewer learning outcomes. For this assessment, all five of the grade 11 courses were reviewed.

Quick Assessment

Nova Scotia's curriculum indicates an interest in covering Canadian history in integrated ways. As with other provinces, Nova Scotia focuses heavily on inquiry, and offers suggestions for differentiated assessment tools and student reflection. This allows inquiry results to be unique, challenging, and critical of traditional narratives of Canadian history. Nova Scotia is the only province that has five options for students learning Canadian history in secondary school, with African Canadian, Gaelic, Acadian, and Mi'kmaw courses offered alongside a more general Canadian history course. However, learning opportunities are not equal for francophone students.

Strengths

- **Anglophone**
 - The Nova Scotia curricula for grades 7, 8, and 11 indicate a committed interest in covering Canadian history in integrated and interwoven ways.
 - Inquiry is supported by differentiated assessment and student reflection, allowing for the results of inquiries to be unique, challenging, and critical toward a traditional narrative of Canadian history.
 - Throughout the courses, students are invited to reflect on their own positions and histories and build independent projects for further study.
- Allowing both anglophone and francophone students to choose from five options in grade 11, including African Canadian Studies, Gaelic Studies, *Études acadiennes*, and Mi'kmaw Studies, gives them the opportunity to understand and enter the study of the diverse Canadian past from a range of perspectives.

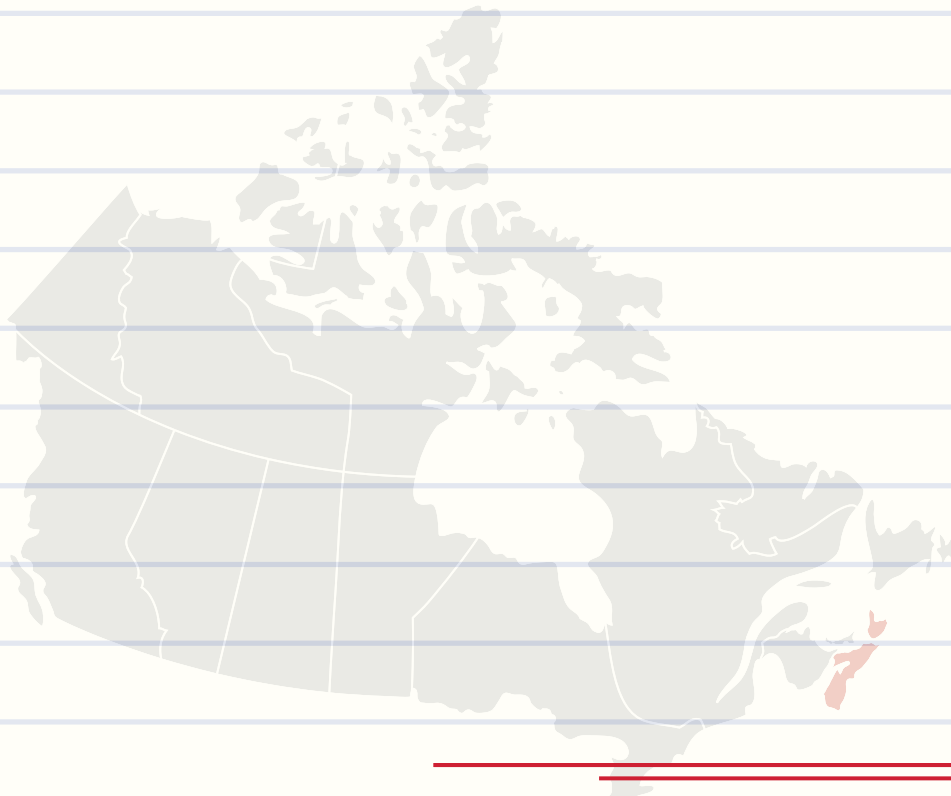
³ The grade 7 and 8 curricula in the Nova Scotia anglophone school system, reviewed in this report, are currently being piloted in select schools with plans to implement them province-wide for the 2022–2023 school year.

⁴ Course taught in French but available to English students.

⁵ Students can opt to take one of the two courses offered only in English (Gaelic Studies or Mi'kmaw Studies) or one of the three courses offered in French (*Études acadiennes*, *Études Afro-canadiennes*, or *Histoire du Canada*).

Recommendations

- Because of the thematic nature of the five grade 11 course options, important content can be missed when students only have to take one of those courses, specifically related to land, Indigenous history, and a response to the TRC's Calls to Action. Nova Scotia should ensure that all courses acknowledge the Indigenous peoples and worldviews of this land, and their histories.
- The grade 11 Canadian history course option on its own is lacklustre, and its division from the other options implies that there is a standard Canadian history narrative separate from those of other distinct cultural and ethnic groups. More opportunities for collaboration across the grade 11 courses would be beneficial, along with a revision to the grade 11 Canadian history option that includes more room for an interwoven understanding of the Canadian past.
- While inquiry is part of all the courses from grades 7 through 11, it is more didactic in the grade 11 courses than the intermediate courses. Revising these grade 11 courses with more creative inquiry, as seen in the new anglophone grades 7 and 8 courses, would improve these courses.
- **Anglophone**
 - Offering the *Études acadiennes* course in English would give students the opportunity to better understand their local history, even if they do not speak French.
- **Francophone**
 - Francophone students in Nova Scotia would benefit from mandatory Canadian history courses at an earlier stage, such as the anglophone curriculum's grades 7 and 8 courses, to prepare them for higher grades and ensure that students do not miss important content. The lack of mandatory history education in middle school can create significant gaps in students' knowledge and understanding of Canadian history.
 - Offering all five optional grade 11 courses in French would provide students with more opportunities to learn in their language of choice.



Describe

Education in Nunavut is organized into four cross-curricular strands. Canadian history is taught under the Nunavusiutit strand of the territory's curriculum, which is interdisciplinary but generally social studies-themed, and includes areas such as entrepreneurship and tourism. In the intermediate grades, Nunavut follows the same social studies courses as the Northwest Territories. Of the three social studies courses at the intermediate level, only the grade 9 "Growth of Canada" course contains a focus on history. While this course is based on outcomes and skills from the Northwest Territories curriculum, the curriculum available on the Nunavut website is less detailed.

At the secondary level, Nunavut mandates Social Studies 10-1 and 10-2, which more closely resemble civics courses with a historical foundation, rather than straight history courses.

For this assessment, the grades 9 and 10 curricula were reviewed.

Quick Assessment

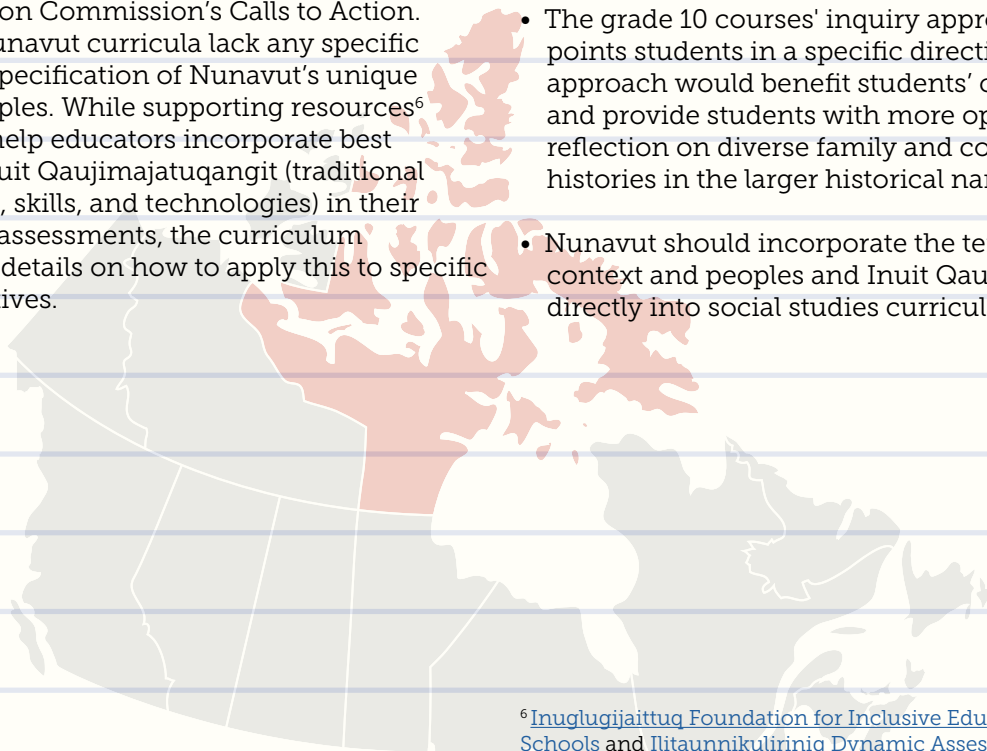
The grade 10 courses in Nunavut provide an updated approach to history education, with more diversified skills sections and a strong approach to land and Indigeneity content and incorporating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. However, the Nunavut curricula lack any specific reference to or specification of Nunavut's unique context and peoples. While supporting resources⁶ are available to help educators incorporate best practices and Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (traditional Inuit knowledge, skills, and technologies) in their classrooms and assessments, the curriculum documents lack details on how to apply this to specific curricular objectives.

Strengths

- The grade 10 social studies courses read as civics courses with a historical foundation, which pair historical thinking with geographical thinking and social participation for diverse content and skills-based courses.
- In the grade 10 courses, students are asked to reflect on their opinions, historically deconstruct the Government of Canada's actions, and make plans for action using the principles of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (traditional knowledge, skills, and technologies). These types of prompts invite students to actively engage with the study of the past and lead to more informed understandings of the present.
- A separate document, "[Nunavut Approved Curriculum and Teaching Resources](#)," provides teachers with resources to aid their teaching of Nunavut, Inuit, and reconciliation-focused topics.

Recommendations

- The grade 9 course follows the 1993 Alberta draft curriculum. That document is outdated and does not always reflect contemporary pedagogical methodology and frameworks, nor does it cover enough diverse histories.
- The grade 10 courses' inquiry approach often points students in a specific direction. A more open approach would benefit students' critical thinking and provide students with more opportunities for reflection on diverse family and community histories in the larger historical narrative.
- Nunavut should incorporate the territory's unique context and peoples and Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit directly into social studies curricular objectives.



⁶ [Inuglugijaittuq Foundation for Inclusive Education in Nunavut Schools](#) and [Ilitaunnikuliriniq Dynamic Assessment as Learning in Nunavut Schools](#).

Describe

Ontario covers Canadian history in three mandatory courses across the intermediate and secondary years: grades 7, 8, and 10. In grade 10, students choose between a Canadian history course in either the “academic” or “applied” stream. The content of the two courses is similar, but the academic course covers content in deeper, more analytical ways than the applied curriculum indicates.

For this assessment, the grades 7 and 8 courses and the two grade 10 courses were reviewed.

Quick Assessment

Ontario revised its curricula in 2013 to emphasize inquiry, and again in 2018 to better meet the Calls to Action put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Ontario curriculum thoroughly covers the experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. These revisions significantly improved both the content and skills sections of the Ontario curricula, providing students with a well-rounded history education and placing Ontario in the top spot of this Canadian History Report Card. The grade 10 applied history course description states that it includes more practical applications of history than its academic counterpart, but this is not reflected in the curriculum.

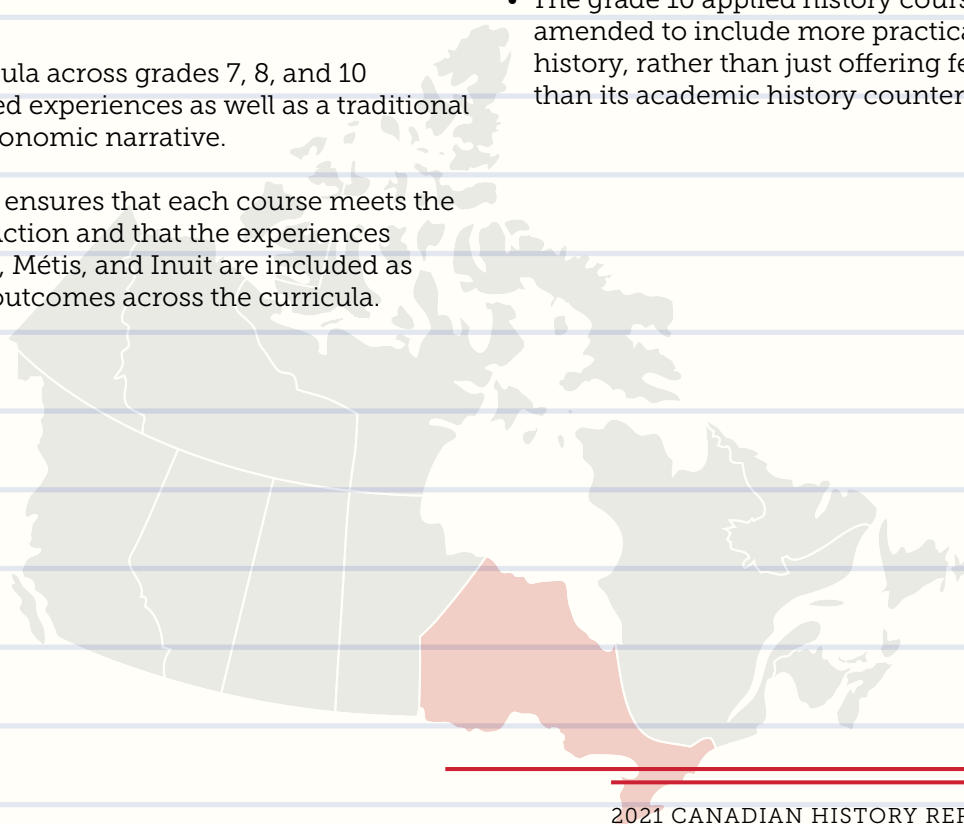
Strengths

- Ontario’s curricula across grades 7, 8, and 10 incorporate lived experiences as well as a traditional political and economic narrative.
- A 2018 revision ensures that each course meets the TRC’s Calls to Action and that the experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are included as examples and outcomes across the curricula.

- While many provinces suggest that teachers can meet curricular outcomes in a variety of ways, Ontario’s diverse suggestions are particularly helpful for teachers looking to teach a range of different histories and complexities in the Canadian past.
- There is a strong emphasis on inquiry to learn history, and curricula foreground learning from different sources, including family and community sources. Curricula also model questions that reflect different ways for teachers to approach inquiry with their students.

Recommendations

- The Ontario curricula can be improved by focusing the current courses. The courses seek to cover an ambitious amount of content and skills and might prove too much to cover. The province should develop pathways to help teachers navigate lengthy curricula documents. Alternatively, dividing the grade 10 course into two courses or grades would help manage the volume of content.
- The grades 8 and 10 courses could benefit from including more past and present comparisons, as seen in the grade 7 course. This would strengthen the reflective and transformative possibilities for learning Canadian history for students.
- The grade 10 applied history course should be amended to include more practical applications of history, rather than just offering fewer expectations than its academic history counterpart.



Prince Edward Island

FINAL GRADES:
ANGLOPHONE: 65% | C
FRANCOPHONE: 61% | C-

Describe

Anglophone: Prince Edward Island uses the Atlantic Social Studies Framework as a structure for its intermediate social studies curriculum. Grade 7 is an “Empowerment” course, grade 8 is a “Canadian Identity” course, and grade 9 covers “Atlantic Canada in the Global Community.” In high school, students are required to take two social studies courses. Because all the course options do not contain Canadian history content, they have not been evaluated here.

For this assessment, the grades 7, 8, and 9 courses were reviewed.

Francophone: The only mandatory Canadian history content in the PEI francophone system is found in the grade 8 social studies course, which includes a module on New France. The grade 10 *Histoire du Canada* is an optional course offered to francophone students in PEI to fulfill graduation requirements of two social studies courses at the secondary level. While the vast majority of students take this course, it is not evaluated here because it is not mandatory.

For this assessment, only the grade 8 course was evaluated.

Quick Assessment

Anglophone: The Prince Edward Island curricula related to Canadian history are interesting but unbalanced. The curricula attempt to focus on social justice while ensuring that students know Canadian history. However, these ideas conflict with each other due to the ways they are presented and framed across the courses reviewed here. Because of this disconnect, these curricula largely fail to ensure that knowing, learning, and mobilizing Canadian history become part of movements for social justice.

Francophone: The province’s francophone Canadian history program is not robust. Students take only one module of Canadian history content in their grade 8 course, *Sociétés du Passé*, which focuses on New France from 1604 to 1763.

Strengths

• Anglophone

- Prince Edward Island’s interdisciplinary approach to history-informed social studies is exciting. The grade 7 course in particular does a good job of presenting chronological history through a focus on empowerment and justice.
- While history courses are not required in each grade, because history is incorporated into required social studies courses throughout the grades, it is never too far from students’ learning.
- PEI sets an example for other provinces with its creative suggestions for active and involved learning through community and personal connections. Actively linking to other resources, such as Parks Canada curricula, is also a cleaner approach to diversifying perspectives on how the past is approached.

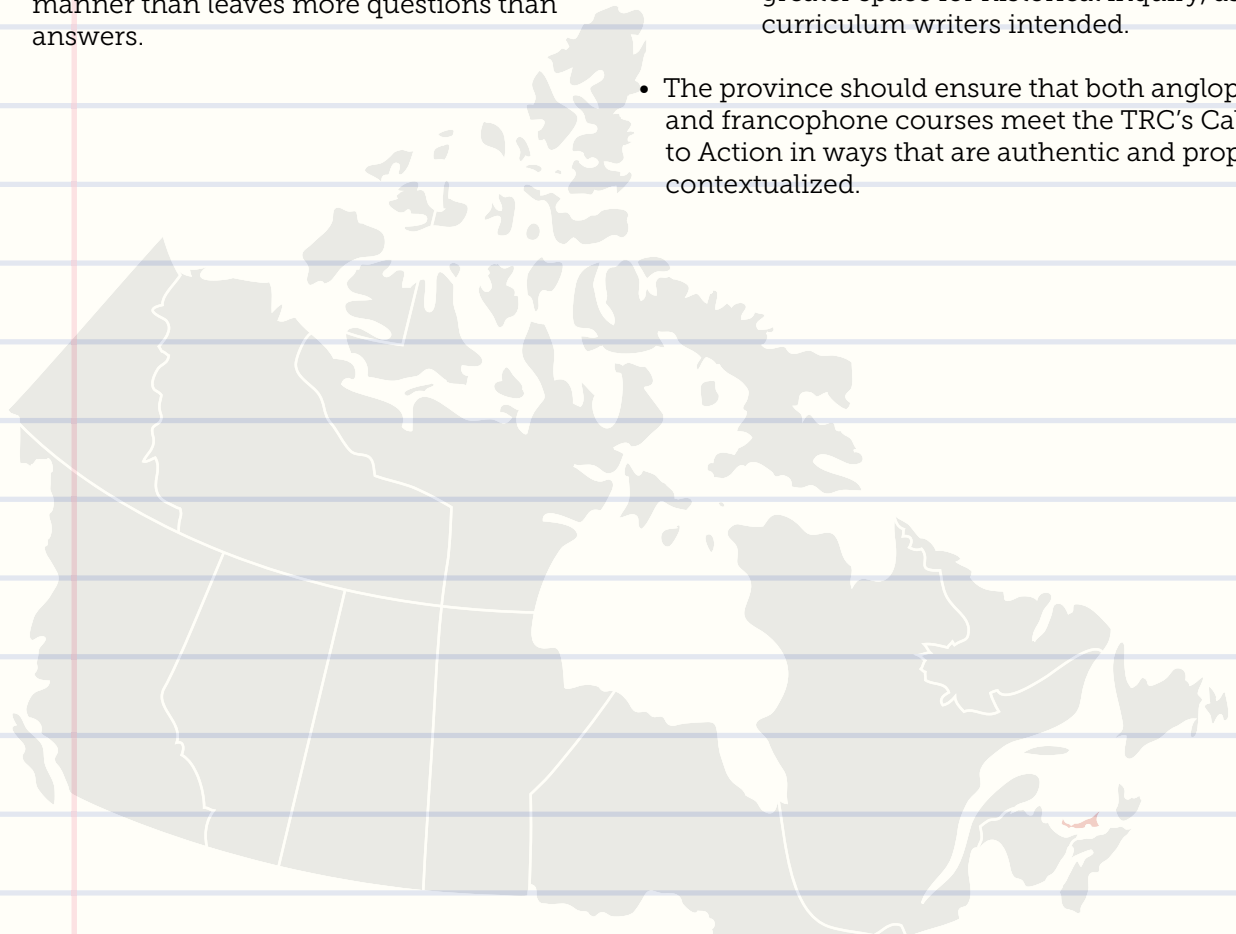
• Francophone

- The New France module in the grade 8 course offers a combination of both geographical and historical knowledge, providing students with context for both.

Prince Edward Island

Recommendations

- Prince Edward Island should apply the combination of empowerment and history found in the anglophone grade 7 course to the framework of the other intermediate and secondary social studies and Canadian history courses, in both the francophone and anglophone systems.
- **Anglophone**
 - PEI must avoid prioritizing traditional Canadian history to the exclusion of lived experiences.
 - PEI would benefit from broadening the verbs used to describe curricular skill objectives to better invite the active learning suggested throughout the courses.
 - The grade 9 globalization course incorporates examples of Canadian history into discussion of modern, global issues. However, this course should be reassessed to ensure that the Canadian history content, specifically that related to Indigenous peoples, is presented in a complementary manner, rather than merely an additive manner that leaves more questions than answers.
- **Francophone**
 - PEI needs more mandatory Canadian history content. The current francophone curriculum offers only one unit in a single mandatory course, giving students little opportunity to discover Canadian history without taking optional courses.
 - While the New France unit of the grade 8 *Sociétés du Passé* course includes comparisons between Acadian and Mi'kmaw societies, issues of colonization, Indigenous-settler relations, and violence are not explicit parts of the curriculum. The curriculum should be updated to provide more critical explorations of the past.
 - PEI should make the optional grade 10 Canadian history course mandatory, to ensure that every student in the francophone system takes the course. The province's students would further benefit from dividing the course into two smaller chronological sections to provide greater space for historical inquiry, as the curriculum writers intended.
- The province should ensure that both anglophone and francophone courses meet the TRC's Calls to Action in ways that are authentic and properly contextualized.



Describe

In Québec, Secondary I, II, III, IV, and V grade levels correspond with grades 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 in other provinces and territories, and are structured around cycles that include more than one year. While three history-related streams are offered to Québec students in their Secondary years, only “History of Québec and Canada” in Cycle Two (Secondary III-V) has an explicit Canadian history focus. This stream has two parts taught over two years, Secondary III (grade 9) and Secondary IV (grade 10), both of which are evaluated here.

Quick Assessment

The curriculum for the “History of Québec and Canada” has a clear and distinct focus on the Canadian past from a francophone perspective. However, with only one stream related to Canadian history across the Secondary cycles, it covers a vast amount of content. This leaves little room for inquiry and critical thinking that can lead to an exploration of the past, rather than rote learning.

Strengths

- The province’s Québec and Canadian history curriculum does a good job of placing distinct francophone perspectives into the larger Canadian narrative. This ensures that students learn central elements of Canadian history from a francophone perspective.
- Québec includes more 18th-century history than other provinces, particularly in high school. This allows students to see the longer history of colonialization, settlement, and commercial enterprise in the Canadian past.

Recommendations

- More Canadian history is needed across the intermediate grades so that students can build a basis of historical knowledge and critical thinking skills to prepare them for the higher-level courses.
- Québec’s Canadian history course, split over two years, tries to cover too much at once. The Secondary III section of the course covers prehistory to 1840, a vast amount of content for one year. While the course excels at covering the traditional Canadian narrative, this comes at the expense of more diverse perspectives on the past. Mandating more courses would allow room for additional dimensions of the Canadian and Québécois story, lived experiences and the inclusion of Indigeneity in the study of the past.
- Québec would benefit from building in opportunities for students to learn from their own multicultural community histories in relation to Canadian and Québécois history, an aspect that is sorely lacking in the current curriculum. The static histories taught in Secondary III and IV would benefit from including the diverse lived experiences of the students themselves.
- There is a greater emphasis on “knowing” rather than “doing” history. Québec should include more opportunities for critical inquiry so that students can use a variety of methods and resources to ask questions about the past, rather than relying on rote learning as the foundation.

⁷The significant grade drop between 2015 (80%) and 2021 (57%) is a result of updated scoring criteria. The 2015 version of this report placed significant emphasis on the Historical Thinking Concepts, which Québec excelled at, and continues to excel at. However, this year’s version of the report card expanded the scope of the skills category, assessing a broader range of skills that are not as clearly reflected in Québec’s curriculum.

Describe

Saskatchewan has three mandatory courses in grades 7, 8, and 9 that cover a range of global social studies issues. These courses do not have a singular Canadian history focus, but Canadian history supports the exploration of transnational themes.

In grade 10, students must choose between taking a Social Studies, Native Studies, or History course. Of these three options, only the Native Studies course includes significant Canadian history content. As a result, we have not evaluated this optional course here. In grade 12, students must take one of three Canadian studies courses: Social Studies, History, or Native Studies.

For this assessment, the grades 7, 8, and 9 curricula were reviewed, along with the three grade 12 course options.

Quick Assessment

The courses in grades 7–9 are unique explorations of topics and issues and, while they include Canada, they have a broader global scope. The topical integration of the Canadian past with global and political issues gives greater weight to the importance of understanding the complexities of Canadian history.

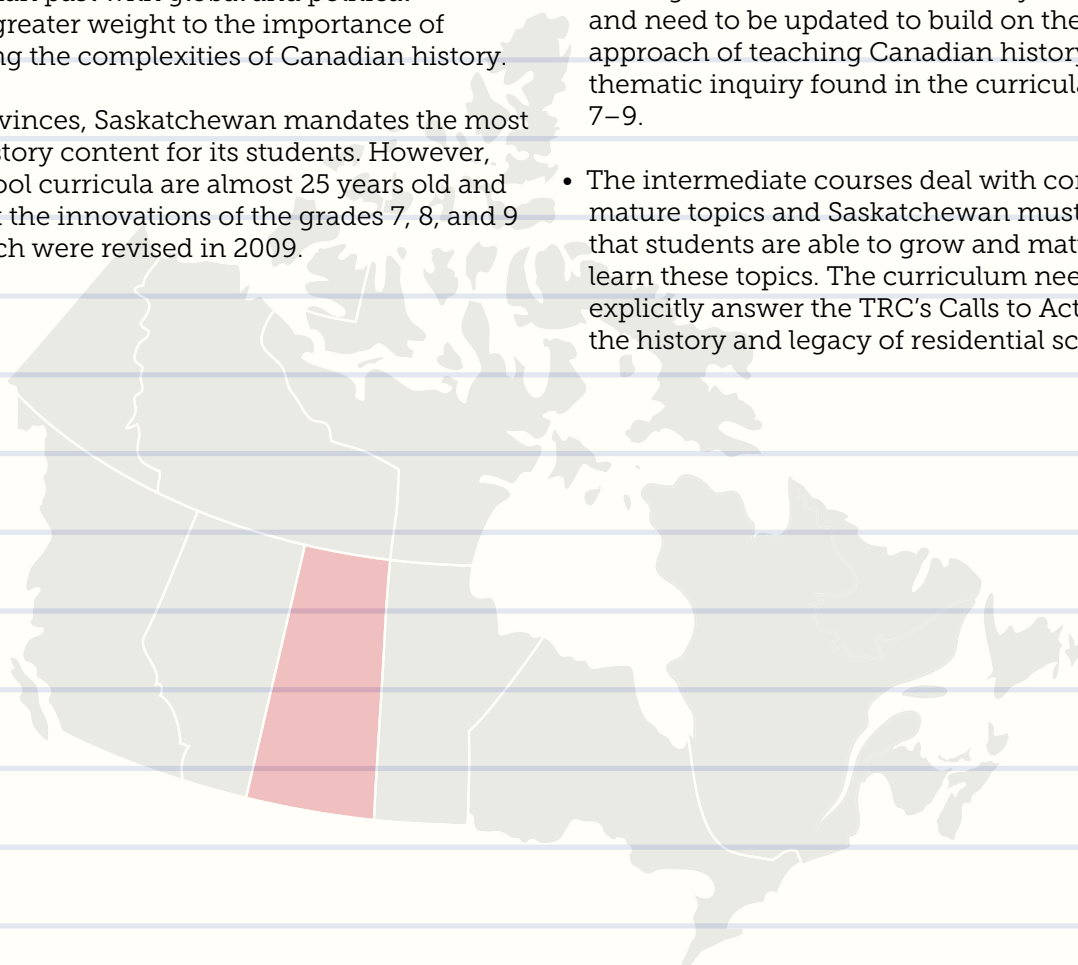
Of all the provinces, Saskatchewan mandates the most Canadian history content for its students. However, the high school curricula are almost 25 years old and do not reflect the innovations of the grades 7, 8, and 9 courses, which were revised in 2009.

Strengths

- Saskatchewan's approach to inquiry in the intermediate grades is exciting, and the diversity of verbs used to describe learning outcomes demonstrates a commitment to educating students by exploring questions.
- Saskatchewan's thematic, contextualized, and transnational approach to intermediate courses provides a fresh approach to teaching students the complexities of the Canadian past and present.
- Saskatchewan requires Canadian history be taught across grades 7–12, and the course options that students are given in high school were designed together and are complementary to each other.

Recommendations

- Saskatchewan's curricula across grades 7–12 lack balance. The courses that focus solely on traditional Canadian history miss the lived experiences of the majority of people in Canada. This is particularly evident in the grade 12 courses.
- The high school courses are nearly 30 years old and need to be updated to build on the interesting approach of teaching Canadian history through thematic inquiry found in the curricula for grades 7–9.
- The intermediate courses deal with complex and mature topics and Saskatchewan must ensure that students are able to grow and mature as they learn these topics. The curriculum needs to explicitly answer the TRC's Calls to Action and teach the history and legacy of residential schools.



Describe

Yukon follows the British Columbia curriculum with, as they have written, “integrated Yukon First Nations language, history, culture and ways of knowing, doing and being into all subject areas and grade levels.”

However, documents or specifications of what the “Yukon content and Yukon resources” are, or the ways in which “Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing, and being” are integrated into the curriculum have not been made public.

Given that these are the same courses, assessment of the Yukon history curriculum is based on the assessment of BC’s curriculum (see [page 10](#)).

Quick Assessment

On the Yukon government website, the page “How First Nations perspectives are incorporated into schools” outlines the ways that Yukon is incorporating these perspectives, not just into curricula, but into school culture and programs. The website highlights the importance of learning about the legacy of residential schools and a mandatory “Our Stories of Residential Schools in Yukon and Canada” unit is now included in the grade 10 social studies curriculum. Other initiatives to incorporate Indigenous perspectives in education (not exclusively history or social studies) include experiential learning programs, First Nations languages, and community involvement.

Strengths

- By building on British Columbia’s curriculum, the Yukon curriculum gives teachers and students a foundation to work from in engaging in inquiry with historical content in their grades 9 and 10 courses.
- The curriculum is tailored for a cultural and regional approach and explicitly states that it should integrate “Yukon First Nations language, history, culture and ways of knowing, doing and being into all subject areas and grade levels.”
- Yukon makes it easy for community partners to understand how they can complement and enhance the curriculum by having an application form to bring “projects, presentations, resources, and materials” into schools prominently linked on the web page.

Recommendations

- Because the Yukon curriculum documents that tailor the British Columbia curriculum to Yukon’s are not readily available online, it is unclear how Yukon First Nations perspectives and histories are integrated into their courses. The website notes that a unit called “Our Stories of Residential Schools in Yukon and Canada” is now included in the mandatory grade 10 social studies course, but does not provide further details on the content of the unit or how this is incorporated. Ensuring easy access to Yukon-focused curriculum documents for teachers, parents, and potential partners looking to co-develop support for teaching and learning would benefit students and teachers alike.
- Currently there are no curricular opportunities for students to explicitly bring in diverse family and community history to the learning of the past. Building some into courses would allow students to understand their own experiences in the context of Yukon history, allowing the curriculum to respond to the increasing change in the world today.
- Yukon would benefit from adding an additional intermediate course, which would set students up for a greater foundation in historical knowledge and historical exploration.