



CANADIAN HEALTHY SCHOOL STANDARDS



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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of This Document

The Canadian Healthy School Standards (the Standards) aim to spark conversations and be a tipping point where the school community comes together to elevate wellbeing in schools in a way that

- reinforces specific accountability and processes for taking a systemic approach to enhancing wellbeing in schools
- builds on existing work
- centres equity, diversity and inclusion
- acts on truth and reconciliation
- supports staff wellbeing

This document was prepared for people who are interested in advocating for, initiating and strengthening Healthy Schools across Canada. You can use this resource as a checklist with which to chart your healthy school journey, or in a non-linear fashion, as you need it.

This document specifically

- ▶ defines Healthy Schools and describes a meaningful framework for promoting (w)holistic*, culturally-sustaining health and wellbeing within school communities
- ▶ leverages multiple ways of knowing, common threads and themes
- ▶ provides a set of refined and understandable standards that support successful implementation
- ▶ anchors Healthy Schools within a human rights, anti-oppression, Truth and Reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion lens
- ▶ presents stories from across the country as practical examples

* There are different approaches to the spelling of (w)holistic. Some use the word holistic in reference to its Greek root of holos, meaning whole, entire, complete. However, holos has no etymological connection to the word whole. As a result the addition of the (w) reflects an intentional shift to the word.

Background

Schools provide a unique setting to support the wellbeing of children and youth in Canada and to promote the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for lifelong health and wellbeing.

The Canadian Healthy Schools Alliance (the Alliance), formed in 2018, brings together Canadian organizations within the fields of education and health to lay an empowering foundation for every school in Canada to centre health and wellbeing as essential for learning and lifelong success.

Empowering schools in Canada to be places that support (w)holistic health and wellbeing was important when we began writing this document in 2019. Since then, the urgency has been amplified. To be sure, the negative impacts of natural disasters, inequality and world health events have been considerable. For example, before the COVID-19 (novel coronavirus SARS-CoV2) pandemic, 73% of Ontario teachers agreed that anxiety disorders were a pressing concern.¹ Canadian Institute for Health Information reports a 61% increase in emergency room visits among children and youth for mental health conditions over the last decade, and Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) reports a further 25% increase during the pandemic.² Increased pressure is being placed on child and youth mental health systems that were already ill-equipped to manage the needs of families. Now, more than ever, there is a shared sense of urgency to prioritize wellbeing within the school setting as essential and as a means to fostering resiliency and recovery.

The expansion of the Healthy Schools model to all schools in Canada can be a key facilitator of health and wellbeing for all children and youth, including Indigenous, newcomer, first generation Canadian, immigrant, refugee and other young people. In developing these Canadian Healthy School Standards, the Alliance has sought to centre the principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, and to critically reflect on the many existing frameworks, stories and practices that are used nationally and globally to foster school health. The resulting Canadian Healthy School Standards offer much-needed clarity and direction, draw on a chorus of voices and experiences, and provide a compelling way forward.

The Alliance offers these Canadian Healthy School Standards as a catalyst for a cascade of investments across the school ecosystem. Indeed, each Ministry of Education, Superintendent and Senator, Principal and Teacher, Family and Guardian, First Nation, Métis or Inuit Knowledge Keeper and Elder, community and cultural leader and partner has an interconnected role to play within the school community. Each holds invaluable information, influence and supports which co-exist and interplay and which will be necessary if we are to shift schools to be places where every child, adolescent, and young adult learns and thrives.

Terminology used throughout this document are defined in Appendix A, and concepts are defined in Appendix B

1 Children's Mental Health Ontario. https://cmho.org/facts-figures/#_ednref20 (Accessed May 22, 2021)

2 Children First Canada website. Code Pink Campaign. <https://childrenfirstcanada.org/campaign/code-pink/> (As of May 21, 2021)

What is a Healthy School?



A healthy school centres (w)holistic health and wellbeing in its policies, its curriculum, its people, its relationships and its environment

Touchstones

1. A Healthy School integrates policies with action at all levels.
2. A Healthy School taps into and leverages the unique protective factors within the local community and environment before, during and after school.
3. A Healthy School is each person within and outside the school bringing knowledge, expertise and resources and sharing responsibility for supporting the health and wellbeing of its children, adolescents and young adults.
4. A Healthy School affirms diversity as a gift, engages and empowers this diversity to chart an affirming and appropriate plan, and is able to adapt plans where needed.
5. A Healthy School is the central hub from which to support the lifelong health and wellbeing of the child, adolescent and young adult.



Background

Comprehensive School Health (CSH) is an internationally recognized framework to support improvements in students' educational outcomes while addressing school health in a planned, integrated and (w)holistic way.


This model builds capacity to incorporate wellbeing as an essential aspect of student achievement. Actions address four distinct but interrelated components that comprise a comprehensive school health approach:

- social and physical environment (including land-based activities)
- teaching and learning (with an interactive and (w)holistic approach)
- policy (that has meaningful procedures)
- partnerships and services (respectful of equity and diversity)

When actions in all four components are harmonized, students are supported to realize their full potential as learners—and as healthy, productive members of society.³

These Standards are intended to build on, rather than replace, existing work related to Comprehensive School Health. The Alliance has used this framework as a starting place given that many schools and governing bodies are looking to it or its Healthy School⁴ equivalents (e.g., Health Promoting Schools, the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model, Healthy School Certification program, Holistic Model) as a catalyst for change. Regardless of the name, the common thread is that **a Healthy School approach is one where school communities come together to create an environment where health and wellbeing are valued and promoted across the whole school.**

The evidence⁵ supporting the scaling of this framework in K–12 schools is compelling. Such noted benefits include:

- 
- mental wellbeing
 - resilience, self-esteem and self-confidence
 - staff wellbeing
 - physical activity
 - cultural safety in learning environments
 - sense of belonging, engagement and deeper connection to the school community
 - internalized values such as responsibility and empathy
 - grounding in and appreciation of one's environment
 - academic success
 - vegetable and fruit consumption
- bullying
 - school absences
 - tobacco and substance use
 - sedentary behaviour

3 Joint Consortium for School Health. (2016). What Is Comprehensive School Health (2-pager). Available from http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/images/What_is_Comprehensive_School_Health_-_2-pager_-_July_2016.pdf

4 For the purpose of this paper, we use the general term 'Healthy Schools' to avoid elevating one term or approach over another.

5 Rodger, S. (2018, July). Ponder This – Reaching the Margins. Presentation to the Canadian Healthy Schools Alliance.

Yet, while Healthy School models show great promise, Dr. Susan Rodger, Associate Professor in University of Western Ontario's Faculty of Education, cautions that evaluation thus far has focused predominantly on relatively highly resourced schools. As such, Rodger suggests that the data is incomplete. Recently, as well, discourses have emerged stating that existing Healthy School frameworks are not universally relevant or appropriate. According to the National Collaborating Center for Indigenous Health, this "stems directly from the basic differences in conceptualizing health and wellbeing between Indigenous and mainstream populations."⁶ Fundamental differences have been identified between the Eurocentric notion of health as being focused on prevention and intervention of ill health for daily living and the Indigenous inclusive orientation to a (w)holistic approach to wellbeing which focuses on the "relationships and responsibilities held across the environment, families, the tribe and ancestors."⁷

Review of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Calls to Action further identifies Healthy Schools as an interlinked process with reconciliation.⁸ The redesign of the Healthy Schools approach as presented in the Canadian Healthy School Standards recognizes the responsibility we all carry to deconstruct the Eurocentric mainstream approach to Healthy Schools. We acknowledge that a more inclusive national Healthy School model may be achieved only through equitable partnerships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and educators. As such the Healthy School Standards herein have been built out of the common threads between the two approaches and co-developed and tested with the guidance and permission of Indigenous knowledge keepers from across this country. Chi-miigwech and Ay-hay (ᐱᓐᓐᓐ).⁹

At the same time, the world has seen a global awakening that has uncovered the inequities inherent within Canada's colonial educational and public institutions. Many Canadian communities are home to the most multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-language schools in the world. The 2016 Canadian Census found that 2.2 million school-age children in Canada were foreign born or first generation. Of these, almost half came from the Asia and Pacific Region. A further 25% came from Africa and the Middle East. The majority (more than three-quarters) of immigrant children and youth under 25 years belong to a visible minority group.¹⁰ The Indigenous population represents 4.6% and is one of the fastest growing segments of the Canadian population.¹¹ It is vital that schools and school boards get serious about dismantling racism and discrimination in their schools.¹² It will lead to better teacher performance, reduce staff turnover increase the sense of safety for Black, Racialized and First Nation, Metis, and Inuit educators, and positively impact student experience.¹³ Simultaneously, equity-affirming groups such as educators and students with disabilities and LGBTQI2S+ also face negative social climates and barriers to inclusion.¹⁴ "To be effective we must drive our work to ensure that we continuously question whether our work meets the needs of some, most or all."¹⁵ Linked to this has been a clear call for a (w)holistic re-conceptualization from the stereotypical consideration that every school or student is or should be the same and to center and affirm equity.

6 Tagalick, S. (2010). A Framework for Indigenous School Health: Foundations in Cultural Principles. National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health. Page 7.

7 Tagalick, S. (2010). A Framework for Indigenous School Health: Foundations in Cultural Principles. National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. Page 8.

8 Toulouse, P. What matters in Indigenous Education. In Measuring What Matters, People for Education. Toronto: March, 2016.

9 Chi miigwech – thank you in Anishinaabe. Ay-hay (ᐱᓐᓐᓐ) – thank you in Cree.

10 Statistics Canada. Immigration and ethnocultural diversity: Key results from the 2016 Census. Available from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025b-eng.htm>

11 Statistics Canada. Analysis of results – Population, 2016. Available from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-552-x/2015001/section08-eng.htm>

12 Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators. (2015.) Voices of Ontario Black Educators: An Experiential Report. Available from http://onabse.org/ONABSE_VOICES_OF_BLACK_EDUCATORS_Final_Report.pdf

13 Davis, M. (2021.) Focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Schools. Available from <https://phccanada.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/Home%20Learning%20Resource/Equity.%20Diversity%20and%20Inclusion.pdf>

14 Egale Canada, (2017). Discrimination and Violence against LGBTQI2S Persons with Disabilities. Available from <https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Egale-Canada-CRPD-Submission-2017-02-24.pdf>

15 Rodger, S. (2018, July). Ponder This – Reaching the Margins. Presentation to the Canadian Healthy Schools Alliance.



In this spirit, the Alliance is putting forward these Canadian Healthy School Standards to spark and shift individual and collective commitment to advancing a distinctly different and inclusive way forward for Canadian education.

This shift is subtle but meaningful.

In the Canadian Healthy School Standards, this shift is embedded through a movement away from deficit- or needs-based models focused on prevention of ill health towards a (w)holistic approach to wellbeing.

The Standards promote strengths-based approaches focused primarily in two areas: illuminating and deepening the strengths within the school community, and moving from fragmented activities towards a comprehensive, system-wide approach to creating a climate that supports wellbeing across a school system.

An asset-based, decolonizing approach to teaching is one that is (w)holistically grounded in what students can do rather than what they cannot do, and what they are doing rather than what they should do.

A Healthy School

- ⇒ honours each person, the interconnection between them, and the land upon which they live
- ⇒ values broader ways of knowing
- ⇒ focuses on what the school community can do together
- ⇒ identifies where there is energy, interest and capacity to strengthen the health and wellbeing of the school community and supports action in that direction.

By focusing on leveraging the assets within the school community, a sense of belonging, respect, self-efficacy and trust can be positively influenced. In these healthy environments and cultures, the protective factors and resilience necessary for health and wellbeing can thrive and unhealthy behaviours are less likely to take root.

Methodology

The Alliance used the 2015 Okanagan Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges¹⁶, PHE Canada's Healthy Schools concept paper¹⁷ and the Joint Consortium for School Health's comprehensive school health model¹⁸ as their starting place for inquiry. They then looked at the ongoing work of Dr. Kate Storey and her team that uncovered essential conditions necessary to positively influence school health¹⁹. A side-by-side synthesis of Indigenous models of health and wellbeing, the Framework for Indigenous School Health²⁰ and interviews with knowledge holders and thought leaders then helped to deconstruct the thinking that guided the earlier work and understand contemporary contexts. This provided direction for the redesign. The Alliance then drafted the Canadian Healthy School Standards and undertook an extensive review process to embed different ways of seeing, knowing and doing.

Limitations

Through the Canadian Healthy School Standards, the Alliance continues to make efforts to strengthen our inclusive partnerships. Although a conscious effort has been made to be as inclusive as possible in our development and review process, the Alliance recognizes that no one document can ever fully represent all voices and stories within Canada. For that reason, the Alliance is committed to updating this document periodically with its partners to best reflect ongoing cultural changes, population shifts and emerging wiser practices and research.

The interface between these two knowledge systems reveals the utility, wealth and richness necessary to animate educational achievement.²¹ (Marie Battiste)

16 Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges (2015).
17 Physical and Health Education Canada. (2012). Healthy School Communities Concept Paper. Available from https://phecanada.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/resources/healthy-school-communities-concept-paper-2012-08_0.pdf
18 Joint Consortium for School Health. (2016). Comprehensive School Health Framework. Available from <http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/about-us/comprehensive-school-health-framework/>
19 SIRCLE Labs. Essential Conditions for Comprehensive School Health. Available from www.katestorey.com/our-projects/essential-conditions-for-comprehensive-school-health/#1593062789991-827e3f36-daeedba3-f7b2
20 Tagalick, S. (2010). A Framework for Indigenous School Health: Foundations in Cultural Principles. National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health.
21 Battiste, M. (2013). Decolonizing Education – Nourishing the Learning Spirit. Purich Publishing, University of British Columbia.



WHY CANADIAN HEALTHY SCHOOL STANDARDS ARE NEEDED

In Canada, education and health are divided responsibilities among local (school or regional health units), regional (school or health district/board/authority) and federal/provincial/territorial (government) authorities. Currently, in addition to each province and territory having jurisdiction over its public education system, there are also private schools and federally funded First Nations schools. Each has unique curriculum and policies, as well as its own cultural, demographic, governance and geographic context. Moreover, in Canada, a number of different Healthy School models exist, with different processes and recommendations. The complex nature of these contexts, cultures, relationships, multi-layered responsibilities and varying levels of accountability creates a unique Canadian educational and health ecosystem. While a focus on (w)holistic wellbeing and national-level change is essential for the future of our nation, it can be slow and difficult to achieve.

National agreement on a set of Canadian Healthy School Standards will provide clarity and direction and cut across the many jurisdictions and boundaries that can and have impeded positive change. Consistent Canadian Healthy School Standards will also provide a respectful and empowering pathway to more investments into the creation of school community-driven solutions rather than one-size-fits-all or one-off health interventions.²² Over time, national agreement will provide a basis for the creation of a set of school-based indicators that can drive deeper and wider understanding of what works and inspire future investments.

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McConnell Foundation. (2019). *Beyond the Binder: Towards More Systemic and Sustainable Approaches to Mental Health and Wellbeing in K-12 Education*, Available from <https://www.healthyschoolsalliance.ca/en/resources>

THE CANADIAN HEALTHY SCHOOL STANDARDS

Starting Points and two types of Standards (Foundational Standards and Implementation Standards) are presented in this document.

Starting Points

Starting Points require attention and stewardship at school or district leadership levels. They open doors and accelerate action, creating the tipping point for a groundswell of Healthy Schools efforts to be activated and sustained.

Critical elements look like...

GETTING FAMILIAR WITH THE STANDARDS

A clear understanding of Healthy Schools and why it's important by all those who hold leadership positions within the educational system can support readiness and reflective practices. Create opportunities for school and district-level conversations about wellbeing, how it is understood and valued and what's involved.

POLICY

Including Healthy School activities in school and board improvement plans, policies and budgets will ensure efforts are interconnected, planned and properly resourced. Support from system leaders influences personal and professional prioritization of wellbeing. Leaders with a vision for wellbeing can, through policy, trigger a cascade of connected, sustainable and responsive action.

FUNDING & PROJECT SUPPORT

Sustainable funding, and budget allocations that consider how each item relates to wellbeing, greatly impact implementation.

TIME

Enough time needs to be dedicated for implementation and success. When approving budgets consider how each item relates to wellbeing. Allotting time for dedicated human resources allows for Healthy School efforts to be viewed as an embedded and meaningful part of the school's culture.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

Partnership with community members built on trust and mutual respect brings new perspectives, strengths and capacity in to schools. It expands ownership for the wellbeing of students beyond the school walls, adding expertise and resources, and reflecting the diversity of the students within the school.

STAFF WELLBEING

The wellbeing of school staff is interconnected with Healthy Schools. Attending to and investing in staff wellness and balance can increase energy, retention, and job fulfillment and is critical to achieving Healthy Schools.

A school district/jurisdiction/charter is a highly interactive community. All staff members should be a focus of wellbeing approaches, because each person is one part of the whole and each can impact or be impacted by other staff, students and parents at different times. Whether a principal, teacher, an administrator, an educational assistant, a bus driver, a [custodian or administrative assistant], each person interacts to varying degrees with students, other staff and parents. We need the whole community to be healthy.²³

(Dr. Charlie Naylor, Retired Senior Researcher, British Columbia Teachers Federation, 2019.)

FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS

Foundational Standards are underlying concepts and frameworks that must be present for the Implementation Standards to be successful. Examples are provided as case studies to demonstrate what the Foundational Standards look like in a school setting. These are not exhaustive. They are intended to spark inspiration and discussion as you cultivate a healthy school.



1. Whole School Approach

Critical elements look like...

- ⇒ building strong relationships with and investing time in community partners and leaders, cultural leaders and Elders, students, parents/guardians, board level administration (or education authorities) and policy makers through meaningful engagement
- ⇒ learning about your school's community and its families, land, teachings, traditions and ways of knowing/doing, and embedding these learnings in your school environment
- ⇒ involving equity-affirming partners within the school community to reflect and decide on the area(s) of focus and the shared path forward
- ⇒ leveraging connections to the land your school community is situated on and surrounded by
- ⇒ leveraging school assets to bring energy into one (or more) meaningful health and wellness activities
- ⇒ offering multiple activities occurring throughout the school environment with a focus on wellbeing
- ⇒ focusing on relationships between staff, principals and vice principals, teachers and administration
- ⇒ respecting the important role language plays in building community by including the languages spoken in your local context throughout the school day—verbally and in print
- ⇒ anti-oppression and anti-racism training for all staff and students of the school community
- ⇒ reviewing existing school rules, policies and norms (policing, regulation, detention, etc.)



Elders and Knowledge Keepers can often be inundated with requests, which may strain the relationship between the school district and the Nation. Be sure to understand and follow respectful protocol when approaching a local Elder. Find your local resources to help you do this! For example, in British Columbia, each school district has an Aboriginal/Indigenous Education Department dedicated to building those relationships. In Ontario, school boards have an Indigenous Education Lead.



2. Wellbeing Integrated Across All Curricula

Critical elements look like...

- ⇒ integrating health and wellbeing initiatives within all subject areas and not siloed within one curriculum area
- ⇒ ensuring school programming is culturally responsive and respectful
- ⇒ teaching and learning of social and emotional skills, attitudes and behaviours as an important part of curriculum integration
- ⇒ increasing land-based education and learning out-of-doors across all curricula
- ⇒ providing professional development sessions to all teachers on quality physical and health education
- ⇒ building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect²⁴
- ⇒ ensuring that teaching resources and learning materials reflect your school community and embrace diversity from a regional, provincial and national scope
- ⇒ including health, wellbeing and (w)holistic elements in a range of school activities (e.g., assemblies, announcements, nutrition breaks, events)
- ⇒ creating school policies and procedures to support the implementation of health and wellbeing initiatives
- ⇒ supporting staff with the time and resources needed to learn about, develop and support a new approach and understanding of traditions and activities
- ⇒ seeing administrators, educators and support staff leading by example within their own classrooms and in the school
- ⇒ welcoming cultural knowledge holders (e.g., First Nation, Metis and Inuit Elders) into the classroom to lead lessons and school activities
- ⇒ transforming indoor and outdoor spaces in an eco-responsible manner to better support movement opportunities and wellbeing conditions
- ⇒ offering deep learning opportunities for making meaning²⁵
- ⇒ provide movement opportunities during all subject areas

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Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012. Calls to Action. Number 63 part iii, page 7.

Fullen, M., Quinn, J., McEachen, J. (2018). Deep Learning: Engage the World Change the World. Corwin Press / Ontario Principals' Council.



3. Charting Your Unique Plan

Every school and community is unique, with diverse capacities and values, and is located in varied cultural, physical, environmental and social settings.

Critical elements look like...

- ⇒ identifying and reflecting on your local relational, cultural, physical and environmental assets
- ⇒ selecting priority health and/or wellness topics to focus on that reflect the interests of your school community
- ⇒ considering how wellbeing activities can support multiple health and wellness aspects and what needs to be present for this to occur
- ⇒ charting a meaningful and realistic plan in context with your local assets and your selected health and/or wellness activities
- ⇒ checking in to make sure that students and their respective communities can see themselves in the ideas within your plan
- ⇒ engaging all school system leaders and staff in professional learning related to the Canadian Healthy School Standards
- ⇒ monitoring the journey and celebrating successes throughout the school year
- ⇒ building a plan for the district, jurisdiction, charter





IMPLEMENTATION STANDARDS

Implementation Standards allow each school community to develop an individual, specialized plan to leverage their assets and cater to their specific interests.

1. Students As Change Makers

Students are the heart of achieving a Healthy School Community. Their voices, leadership, and enthusiasm create increased and meaningful engagement. Students serve as change makers through peer-to-peer and student-to-teacher interactions and in their school communities through storytelling/reaching/influencing others around them to make healthy choices for themselves, their families and the school community. All students bring unique skills, strengths, experiences and knowledge into the school community.

Build on those strengths and experiences, use supportive language, share power and ensure that the space is fully accessible. Be sure to centre and support students in

- identifying topics they feel should be prioritized in their school
- acknowledging differing views and experiences regarding health and wellbeing
- being open to multiple plans and wellness-related initiatives springing up

2. School-Specific Autonomy

When working towards a Healthy School Community, activities should be driven by the school community, working to meet the interests of the school community, not in a top-down manner. By widening the conversation, the school community can weave various relational, cultural, physical and environmental experiences, strengths and assets into the Healthy School activities. Plan for, support, and engage as many people and stakeholders as possible in discussion and on the Healthy Schools team to better understand and affirm the context and culture of the school community. This meaningful inclusion of the school community as knowledge holders will help to develop trust and accountability and ultimately anchor the activities in meaning.

3. Demonstrated Administrative Leadership

Principals and/or other administrators play an invaluable role throughout the Healthy School process and are a key leader in mobilizing a culture shift within a school community. A Healthy School calls for a Healthy School Committee (or other group) to be established and called on to collaboratively explore, plan and carry out the wellbeing priorities of the school community. A key component is that leadership teams with the Principal, Assistant or Vice

Principal, School Counsellor, Student Services Lead, Teacher representative and/or staff representative are all actively engaged, rather than being merely sideline supporters and offering passive buy-in. Given that Principals and other administrative leaders in schools have a role as “gatekeepers”—deciding who enters the school or participates in school-related activities—it is critical that they are involved in Healthy School planning and give permission for community partners (e.g., families/caregivers, community-based organizations, Public Health staff) to participate in the Healthy School Committee’s work. It is vital to sustainable and authentic success to have administration participating and involved in the journey in a self-aware, informed and active way.



4. Higher-Level Support

Leadership and support at district, union, provincial/territorial and/or First Nation/Métis/Inuit levels set the tone, build the confidence among the school community that health and wellbeing is highly valued, demonstrate commitment and provide resources (time/funding/staff) to Healthy School activities. This confidence can widen and deepen school community engagement. This support can come in the form of participation in meetings, programming or planning, recognition/awards or through making time at meetings to learn about the programs and successes of each school. Higher level support is also demonstrated when affirming policies, improvement plans, partnership agreements, procedures, guidelines (e.g., reducing sedentary behaviour, homework, screen time), directives or wellbeing policies are put in place and resources are dedicated to support Healthy Schools.



5. Dedicated Champion(s) To Engage School Community

Healthy School champions are a key ingredient in the success of any Healthy School process. A dedicated staff champion is required to provide leadership, support the implementation of projects, and ensure on-going interconnection of Healthy School programming in schools. The staff champion can be a Principal, Assistant Principal, School Counsellor, Student Services Lead, Teacher, Educational Assistant, Secretary/Administrative Assistant, Building

Maintenance personnel, etc. While much focus of the Healthy Schools approach is on students, the wellbeing of these staff champions, apart from what they do for and with students, must also be considered. Minimizing workload with additional non-instruction time will help to focus energy and boost impact.



6. Community Support

Establishing strong internal and external relationships and building active partnerships with the community outside of the school walls play a key role in the success of establishing a Healthy School. This supportive community can become the backbone to the Healthy Schools process and should include a blend of Students, Parents/Guardians, Community and Local Business Partners, Student School Leadership, and School Board/Authority/District or Government Officials. This Healthy School Committee will help Healthy School activities gain traction, help strengthen their impact and extend the reach of the activity beyond the school walls.

Attention to building authentic, respectful relationships between and with the committee and the community includes sharing decision-making power with its members. Design each meeting as a discussion circle for divergent views, creative discoveries, strong opinions and interests to come forward. In this way the interests, interconnections, plans, progress and responsibility of being a Healthy School will be shared with the whole school community.

Champions must honour the interconnectedness of the school community and its past and present knowledge, traditions and values. Champions must facilitate relevant connections between the Healthy School committee and the broader community. This may take the form of informal conversations and regular emails, newsletters in multiple languages, announcements, approved social media groups to track progress, connecting, raising awareness and celebrating the work being done. By doing so, different partners and members of the community can get involved, leading to wrap-around, student-centered support.



7. Quality And Use Of Evidence

Gathering evidence in the form of school-based process and outcomes information, stories, individualized school reports and research findings takes time and resources. Often this is a challenging step in the process, but it can be very useful in planning, refining, and supporting school communities in the longer term. Teams should continually collect and reflect on focused evidence from their school community and partners to chart and re-chart their Healthy Schools activities.

Information can be gathered through stories or qualitative and quantitative approaches. Some examples include surveys, interviews, focus groups, sharing your story, observations, and other evidence-informed techniques. Teams should determine the type of data required and whether it should be disaggregated to make decisions, and then select an appropriate/inclusive method to collect it. For example, data collection and analysis will need to consider Indigenous principles related to ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP).²⁶ Data should be collected regularly throughout the process and used to inform decisions, question whether the efforts meet the needs of some, most or all, and track progress and changes over time.



8. Professional Learning

Professional learning and development prior to Healthy School program initiation is key for building knowledge, skills, confidence and motivation. Ongoing formal and informal learning opportunities should be made available. School staff should seek out and attend Healthy School and (w)holistic wellbeing conferences and workshops and create personal learning networks and book clubs to strengthen capacity within the school. Administrators can support this by including professional development in budgets and timetables; integrating professional development into existing staff time (for example, through meetings); or connecting school health champions with the Canadian Healthy Schools Alliance for support and guidance.

If you work with First Nations, consider how you interact with First Nations data. OCAP® asserts that First Nations alone have control over data collection processes in their communities, and that they own and control how this information can be stored, interpreted, used, or shared. Visit fnigc.ca/ocap-training/ to learn more.



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First Nations Information Governance Centre. The First Nations Principles of OCAP. Available from <https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/>.



PUTTING THE STANDARDS INTO ACTION

The Standards presented in this document have enormous potential for improving the health and wellbeing of children and youth. These Standards in no way displace existing Comprehensive School Health approaches or minimize the excellent work that has been undertaken across Canada. Rather, they advocate for school communities to:

- ⇒ build on existing work and the assets within school communities
- ⇒ deepen and widen the reach and impact of Healthy School efforts by integrating change across the whole school system – moving beyond fragmented or siloed interventions and using a systemic approach to create a climate of wellbeing within a school
- ⇒ centre Healthy School approaches on equity, diversity, inclusion and reconciliation to ensure they reflect and are responsive to all learners in Canada

But how might a school community go about turning their good actions into a story of long-term transformative change? The success stories below illustrate some of the key aspects of how a school community can work together to create a climate of wellbeing across their school system through a Healthy School approach. A wealth of resources to support your Healthy School planning and action are also available at healthyschoolsalliance.ca. The Alliance will continue to add resources to this website, in both French and English, in order to support your work moving forward.

Bringing the Standards to Life Through Stories

East Three Secondary School, Northwest Territories²⁷

East Three Secondary School's story is the seed of something great! It illustrates a range of elements that can propel Healthy Schools actions to new heights.

[East Three Secondary School](#) (ETSS) is found on the traditional lands of the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit Peoples - Beaufort-Delta Divisional Education Council, in Inuvik, Northwest Territories. Inuvik is the largest Canadian community north of the Arctic Circle and is home to 3,200 people. ETSS is a Grade 7-12 school, with a population of just under 300 students.

As you read this, we call on you to ask – what can you do in your role to widen and deepen the good work being done in your school or community?



"Growing up with the Indigenous games in the school really had a positive impact on me. I had multiple opportunities to connect with the culture which is incredibly important not only to me, but to other students who have the opportunity to learn about it. It is incredible to connect kids back to their culture...making sure each student participates and enjoys it, is far beyond what is expected, and has definitely made a difference in my education."

(Cassidy, Grade 12, Inuvialuit youth from Inuvik, NWT)

Healthy School Standard	How East Three Secondary School (ETSS) Has Brought The Healthy School Standards To Life
Whole School Approach	Indigenous language, culture and traditional practices are not extras we “have to do”, they are enriching practices written into policy that add value to our learning environment.
Wellbeing Integrated Across All Curricula	We have a vibrant on-the-land (outdoor education) program where our students participate in traditional activities like hunting, trapping, ice fishing, plant identification and wilderness safety practices. Teachers regularly integrate these experiential learning opportunities into their math, science or physical education classes.
Charting Your Unique Plan	Each school within our region has a school-based Indigenous Language & Culture committee, supported by two school board consultants, who help to develop a cultural calendar for the school. They brainstorm ideas to support appropriate and culturally-relevant experiences and lessons that match with the seasonally appropriate traditional practices. This committee meets regularly during the school year and continually reflects and re-evaluates plans and chosen activities.
Students as Change Makers	ETSS activates our students to champion opportunities within the school. Regularly, older students are brought into younger classrooms to demonstrate traditional games and to work with younger students in traditional ways to pass knowledge and skills to younger members of the community. We have students who are expanding their influence outside of our small school community, reaching into the larger Inuvik and Beaufort-Delta Region through participation in youth councils, as board members or creating ‘for-youth’ Indigenous-focused publications.
School-Specific Autonomy	School-based Indigenous Language & Culture committees have the freedom to identify specific needs and cultural considerations at the local school level. While all schools fall under larger school board directives, there is also autonomy given to each school to develop programs and lessons tailored to our students. The two Indigenous curriculum documents are guiding publications, allowing for the individuality and creativity of each teacher to adapt lessons for their students, matching content to the students’ strengths or interests.

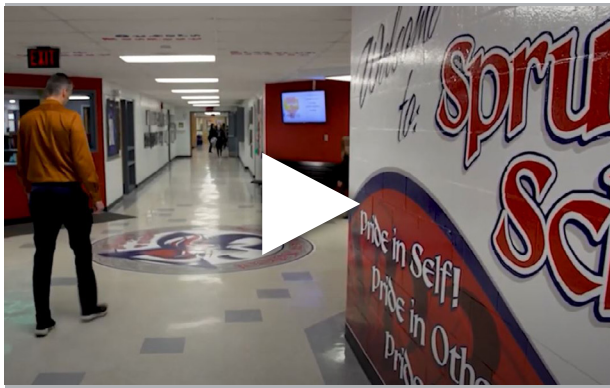
Healthy School Standard	How East Three Secondary School (ETSS) Has Brought The Healthy School Standards To Life
Demonstrated Administrative Leadership	<p>All teachers new to teaching in the Northwest Territories are enrolled in a program called “New to the North”. This is a two-day intensive course to start the conversation around what teaching in the NWT looks and feels like, highlighted by Indigenous awareness training. Two days are by no means enough, but the training starts new teachers off on a positive path. Within the school year, we have two full days set aside for cultural development for staff (like Professional Development days). These days are organized and supported by our locally elected education authority (similar to a board of trustees), who represent the community’s interests in the school. At the start of our academic year, each school creates an Indigenous School Improvement Plan (ISIP) to guide, track and report on the goals we developed at the start of the year. The ISIP document is monitored by administration board officials, to ensure the school is always incorporating Indigenous approaches to our daily practices.</p>
Higher-Level Support	<p>The Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit curricula guide our practices to ensure we are using culturally centered, sensitive, reflective and appropriate methods and content in our classrooms. These two curriculum documents were locally developed, with input from all Northwest Territories educational and Indigenous partners, leading the content of the documents to be culturally relevant to the Peoples of the NWT.</p>
Dedicated Champion(s) To Engage School Community	<p>The teacher champion and East Three Secondary School staff engage community partners including The Gwich'in Tribal Council, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, local band offices, RCMP, Town of Inuvik, health and social services, cultural experts and local elders, personal counselors, public health nurses, youth justice council, LGBTQ+ organizations, nutritionists and local yoga and fitness instructors. Bringing these community groups into the school serves multiple purposes. Building connection between the community and our students puts faces to the names of people and organizations who can help, and sparks open, inclusive, participatory conversations across all of the people who come together to support the school.</p>
Community Support	<p>Traditional games including Arctic Sports and Dene Games are a staple of physical education programming. Archery, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing are taught in partnership with local experts and elders.</p>

Healthy School Standard	How East Three Secondary School (ETSS) Has Brought The Healthy School Standards To Life
Quality and Use of Evidence	<p>East Three Secondary School is tracking the uptake and retention of language by our students and staff. Our Indigenous School Improvement Plan (ISIP) and Indigenous Language & Culture (ILC) committee reviews the language data that is collected and the level/quality at which our students are able to communicate. Student participation is tracked and feedback is gained from participants and elders acting as instructors to reflect on our efforts and refine ways to improve the delivery of our programming. Goals for teacher language training have also been set over the past two years.</p>
Professional Learning	<p>Teachers have been taught Indigenous greetings and are learning key phrases in the local languages. Additionally, the East Three Secondary School team created a school-wide Wellness Day conference.</p>



Bringing Healthy Schools to Life

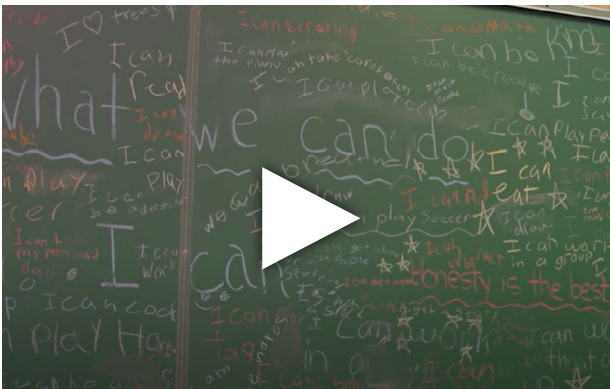
The following videos provide examples of how four Canadian schools have embedded Healthy School models across their school community.



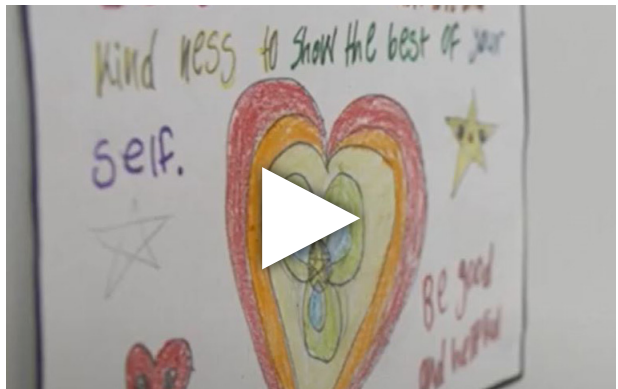
Video:
[Chinook's Edge School Division
Offline & Connected](#)



Video:
[Northland School Division
– Learning on the Land](#)



Video:
[Bulkley Valley School District – Empowering
Wellbeing Through Co-Teaching](#)



Video:
[Edmonton Catholic Schools –
Steering a Big Ship](#)

You can find these videos in the
YouTube playlist:
<https://bit.ly/36FlcnO>



Supporting Future Action

These Standards provide a clear call to action for school system leaders and policy-makers to champion Healthy School approaches within their jurisdictions. **Simply stated – we cannot afford not to invest in Healthy Schools.**

As more and more school communities across Canada work together in Healthy School processes, stories like East Three Secondary’s and the data that are generated will spark meaningful change in the lives of children, adolescents and young adults across Canada. To support the growth of Healthy Schools across Canada, meaningful evaluative tools are necessary. This work is well underway. Since 2019, the Alliance has tested existing tools with schools in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia as well as with the northern and remote communities to understand the strengths and gaps in real time and in different contexts.

Stay tuned to healthyschoolsalliance.ca

Suggested First Steps To Create Your Healthy School Community

- Read the Canadian Healthy School Standards and consider what a Healthy School might look like in your community.
- Check out [stories](#) (see video links on page 24) of school communities that have implemented successful Healthy School models.
- Build momentum and support for implementing a Healthy School approach at all levels within your school community.
- Check back to the [Canadian Healthy Schools Alliance website](#) regularly for new resources to support you in this work.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Glossary

Because this is a national document, it is important to ensure that terminology is clear. The language in your jurisdiction may be different from what is used here. Please use the following chart as a guide.

When we say...	We also mean...	
Community Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous (First Nation, Métis, Inuit) Knowledge Keepers and Elders Cultural and/or Religious Leaders Politicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local First Nations Métis Charter Communities Community-based organizations and partners
Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Principal School Vice-Principal Director of Education Director of Indigenous Education Métis Charter Community leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Principal/Director of Instruction Indigenous lead Superintendent Trustee School Board Staff
Comprehensive School Health Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy Schools Approach Coordinated School Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole School Approach Comprehensive School Health Approach
Healthy School Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy School Health Promoting School Wellbeing school Immersion School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (W)holistic Wellness Schools Health Promoting Schools Culturally Sustaining Healthy School
Physical and Health Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Education Health Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Physical Education Land-Based Education
School Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Programs School Policies School Procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Initiatives School Events School Curriculum School Pedagogy

Appendix B: Key Concepts

Wellbeing

There are many definitions of wellbeing. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing has adopted the following as its working definition:

*The presence of the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression focused on but not necessarily exclusive to good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation, and access to and participation in leisure and culture.*²⁸

Researchers from different disciplines find that wellbeing is associated with:

- self-perceived health
- longevity
- healthy behaviours
- mental and physical health
- social connectedness
- productivity
- factors in the physical and social environment²⁹

Wellbeing encompasses many domains and can change based on the context. It requires individual and collective nurturing to find balance and promote resiliency and flourishing.

In Indigenous communities, wellbeing is linked within the Medicine wheel, as well as Pimatisiwin (Good living—Cree) and Netaklimk (Living well—Mi'Kmaq). Through these depictions of wellbeing, common threads of interconnectedness, connection to the land, (w)holism and balance are present. Thomas Doherty has offered the Anishinaabe view of the four directions: north, south, east, west. Attending to all four directions with mutual respect for one another's feelings and thoughts can be the drawing point of commonality that drives the relationships that are formed and built upon in Healthy Schools. By using empathy and understanding, embracing the unknown and working together, we can better achieve a safe and comforting environment for educators and students.

Human Rights

Healthy Schools support human rights included in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), especially those related to attainable standards of health (article 24) and the right to education. Article 28 of the CRC guarantees the right to access to education. Article 29 sets out the aims of education and emphasizes the importance of the (w)holistic development of each child.

Healthy School

A Healthy School Community supports and encourages young people's academic, physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development within aspects of school and learning. Moreover, it is one that acknowledges the joint responsibility of the school and broader community for the health of students, staff and families who are part of a school.³⁰ A Healthy School Community does not live only within the walls of the school building. It extends into a community that brings all levels of administration and support together to truly affect change at all system levels, with the goals of supporting the health and wellbeing of all students within that community. A Healthy School Community must be built on partnerships and collaboration among all members of the community, including parents/guardians, Elders, Métis Senators, teachers, public health representatives and—most importantly—students. Healthy Schools acknowledge that educational spaces are not limited to only literacy and numeracy but encompass a (w)holistic vision; it's in the quality of the relationships that are built, the calm that you create where new learning can happen, and where new memories get laid down.

28 Canadian Index of Wellbeing, University of Waterloo. (2021). What is Wellbeing? Available from <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/what-wellbeing>

29 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Wellbeing Concepts. Available from <https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm#:~:text=There%20is%20no%20consensus%20around,with%20life%2C%20fulfillment%20and%20positive>

30 Physical and Health Education Canada. (2012). Healthy School Communities Concept Paper. Available from https://phcecanada.ca/sites/default/files/content/docs/resources/healthy-school-communities-concept-paper-2012-08_0.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission finished its six-year investigation into the Canadian Indian residential school system and published a series of reports that illustrate the lasting effects of Canada's colonialism and suggest paths for moving forward. Education is addressed in Calls to Action 6 to 12, and Physical Education and Sport are addressed in Calls to Action 87 to 91. It is important that the Calls to Action be read in their entirety, because addressing the systemic effects of colonialism and racism is an ongoing, intersectional practice. This is both a legal and moral obligation. Acknowledging and carrying out these calls to action will begin to help create an environment where all students are taught to honour each person and the land upon which they live and to value broader ways of knowing, understanding, and navigating changes. This understanding helps create an environment of safety where Indigenous learners can thrive.

“Education is the belief in possibilities. It is a belief about knowledge systems. It is a belief in the capacities of ordinary humans. We as educators must refuse to believe that anything in human nature and in various situations condemns humans to poverty, dependency, weakness, and ignorance. We must reject the idea that youth are confined to situations of fate, such as being born into a particular class, gender or race. We must believe that teachers and students can confront and defeat the forces that prevent students from living more fully and freely. Every school is either a site of reproduction or a site of change. In other words, education can be liberating, or it can domesticate and maintain domination. It can sustain colonization in neo-colonial ways, or it can decolonize.”³¹ (Marie Battiste)

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Approaching Healthy Schools with an equity, diversity and inclusion lens will not only support the development of life skills, it will also prepare students to become the changemakers and citizens our society needs. Equity is a just, fair and principled approach to uphold that includes the acknowledgement and dismantling of systemic barriers that prevent equal treatment for all and cause people to experience things differently. Diversity has many facets that intersect, such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, nationality, citizenship, sexual orientation, ability, age, family status, religion, and language. Diversity also refers to the unseen dimensions of identity—beliefs, ideologies, views, and knowledge systems. Inclusion means that all people have the right to be valued, appreciated and respected as members of the classroom and school community. Fostering an inclusive environment will enhance the overall experience of all students in your class and school.

Protective Factors

Characteristics or experiences (e.g., healthy eating patterns, physical activity, sleep, meaningful connections, positive self-image, social competence, supportive communities, positive role models) that can help people to be more resilient in the face of risks or challenges (e.g., adverse childhood experiences, poverty, violence, inequality).

Youth Voice

Students are the experts of their own lives and should be encouraged to advocate for their collective benefit. The meaningful participation of all students fosters a culture of acceptance and belonging for all students. Moreover, it translates into students feeling valued, having a sense of purpose, and having opportunities to make meaningful contributions. Young people want to be involved in accessible and culturally relevant activities in their communities³².

31 Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing Education – Nourishing the Learning Spirit*. Purich Publishing, University of British Columbia. Page 17.

32 UNICEF Canada and Students Commission of Canada. (2017). *My Cat Makes Me Happy: What children and youth say about measuring their wellbeing*. https://www.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/2017-08/UNICEF_One%20Youth%20Report.pdf

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Appendix D: The Team

The CHSA

The [Canadian Healthy Schools Alliance](#) is a collaboration of stakeholders spanning the interests of both health and education, working together with accountability, coordination, collaboration and transparency to foster collective action around Healthy Schools. It is led by CASSA, CSBA, DASH, EAS, Ophea, PHE Canada and Sircle Labs in partnership.

Writers

Melanie Davis is the Executive Director of Physical and Health Education Canada. With Bachelor and Master degrees in Social Development and Public Policy, Melanie focuses on ensuring a 360-degree perspective and activation across broad sectoral levels to provide the structure and support all children and youth need—especially those who experience disproportionately negative outcomes. As Executive Director of Physical and Health Education Canada, Melanie is a champion for ensuring every child and young person is empowered with the knowledge, skills and competencies to lead active healthy lives.

Ellen Long is the Lead, Engagement and Knowledge Mobilization for Physical and Health Education Canada and passionate about living a healthy active lifestyle and empowering Canadians—especially youth—to do the same. She has been working in the not-for-profit education sector to develop and deliver innovative educational programs for the past decade. She has an honours Bachelor of Kinesiology from Western University, and a Bachelor and Master of Education from the University of Ottawa.

Dr. Pamela Rose Toulouse is originally from the community of Sagamok First Nation. She is a proud Anishinaabe woman who comes from a long line of educators. Dr. Pam (as she is more fondly known) was a Full Professor in the Faculty of Education (Concurrent English Language) at Laurentian University. She has since retired after 28 years of service in education. Her areas of specialty continue to be inclusive education, classroom management, lesson planning, learning cycles, assessment/evaluation, technology, differentiated instruction, Indigenous Education and social justice collaborations. She is a 3M National Teaching Excellence Award Fellow, recipient of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance Teaching Excellence Award and holds two other teaching excellence awards as well.

Contributors

Dr. Kate Storey is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta and Distinguished Researcher - Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation. Kate is a Centre for Healthy Communities Scientist and Lead for 'Healthy Schools.' Dr. Storey's research program SIRCLE (Settings-based Intervention Research through Changes in Lifestyles & Environments) focuses on school- and community-based strategies to promote wellbeing, prevent chronic diseases, and reduce health inequities. Dr. Storey's work aims to create a culture of wellness for kids, their families, and their communities through programs that foster resilience and empowerment. An established leader in creating Healthy School Communities, she has implemented, evaluated, and scaled healthy living programs in communities with thousands of children and has established partnerships across sectors and levels to facilitate sustainability.

Lise Gillies is of Cree/Métis (English River FN/Métis Nation, Ise a la Crosse SK) and Swedish/Scottish descent. She spent ten years working in BC's largest school district (Surrey) in both Special Education and Aboriginal Education. It was there that she first witnessed the power of community sport as strengths-based programming for urban Indigenous youth. After supporting Team BC 16U Female volleyball to a silver medal at the 2017 North American Indigenous Games, Lise left the school district and joined the Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council (ISPARC) of BC. Lise now works with Hope and Health, an organization focused on removing barriers to sport and physical activity for Indigenous children and youth, inclusive of those living away from home and/or out of their home community in foster/alternative care. Lise lives in beautiful Cowichan Tribes Territory in Maple Bay with her husband, daughter and parents.

Dr. Antony Card started as Dean of the Faculty of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, in September 2018. Prior to that, he was Dean of the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Associate Vice-President (Research) for the Grenfell Campus of Memorial University. Antony completed his doctoral work at the University of Southampton U.K. and emigrated to Canada in 2002. Antony is an active Board Member of PHE Canada and has taught PE methods courses to primary/elementary education students and online Master of Physical Education courses in Comprehensive School Health and Leadership in Physical Education.

Dr. Scott Leatherdale is a Professor and University Research Chair in the School of Public Health and Health Systems at the University of Waterloo. His work focuses on advancing a systems science approach to primary prevention activities, developing and evaluating population-level health interventions across multiple risk factor domains, and creating research infrastructure to facilitate large population studies in chronic disease prevention via the COMPASS system (<https://uwaterloo.ca/compass-system/>). Dr. Leatherdale was an inaugural winner of the CIHR-IPPH Trailblazer Award in Population Health Solutions.

Drew Maginn is a Director at Ophea. His work includes 15+ years of developing and evaluating regional, provincial and national health promotion programs, including school-based interventions with a focus on the comprehensive school health approach. His contribution to this area focused on supporting the conceptualization, development and evaluation of Ophea's Healthy Schools Certification, an Ontario-based program that focuses on supporting and recognizing schools for adopting a Comprehensive School Health approach at the school level to improve student health and wellbeing.

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