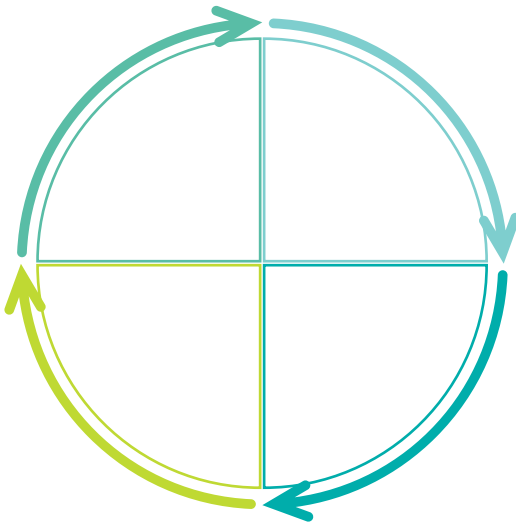**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

OPENING WORDS

Indigenous peoples' experiences with education in Canada has been a contentious one. The focus from the outset of imposed, colonial-based education has centred on assimilation and/or segregation of Indigenous peoples from their communities and worldviews (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health et al., 2009).

The history of education for Indigenous peoples in Canada has structural and societal roots mired in marginalization and subjugation. Today, the improved state of education for Indigenous peoples has its foundations in the resiliency of Indigenous communities and social justice movements advocating for inclusion and change (Iseke-Barnes, 2008; People for Education, 2013).

So, what is inclusion? Who are Indigenous peoples? What are the issues that face Indigenous peoples? How can education be reconceptualized to include Indigenous ways of knowing? And, why should we care? These are questions that will be examined throughout this paper.

People for Education, in its *Measuring What Matters* initiative, offers a body of research and student competencies that provides an opportunity to think critically about schooling success beyond test scores and standardized curriculum. It is a chance for those concerned with education to engage in conversations around what is important for the holistic development of our children, youth and world. These same themes and conversations are what guide Indigenous communities on forsoyh0ie Indig3 TDud re .on ning for their peoples (Nadeau & Young, 2006). Student achievement for Indigenous Nations is based on a birth TDdeath continuum that is holistic and devoted to interconnectedness (Malott, 2007). The theme of holism resonates through the *Measuring What Matters* project, positing it on conceptual alignment with Indigenous epistemologies.

What matters TDIndigenous peoples in education is that children, youth, adults and Elders have the opportunity to develop forsoygifts in a respectful space. It means that all community members are able to contribute to society (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and are physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually balanced (Iseke, 2010; Marule, 2012). This ability to give and ability to be well comes directly from the joining of the sacred and the secular. It is about fostering identity, facilitating well-being, connecting TDuand, honourie .anguage, infusing with teachings and recognizing he inherent righg3 TDself-determination (Lee, 2015). Living a goodDud is what matters, and these thoughts are reflected in Figure 1.0. The physical refers TD he body and comprehensive health of a being. The emotional is concerned with relationships3 TDself, o hers (including non-humans) and he on th. The intellectual is based in natural curiosity adDuove for .on ning. The spiritual is theDudved conscientiousness and footprint that a being .onves on fois world.

This paper, *What MattersDInDIndigenous Education: Implementing A Vision C0ie Ited To Holism, Diversity And Engagement,* explores anDIndigenous approach3 TDquality .on ning environments and relevant competencies/skills. It focuses on select work from People for Education and draws out the research, concepts and hemes that align with Indigenous determinants of educational success. This paper also expands on fois work by offering perspectives adD

FIGURE 1.0
Holistic Model of Balance on Living a GoodDLife

Note: This model is anDexample of the Indigenous concepts that matter and extend beyond current student success measures in education.

insights that are Indigenous and authentic in nature. The three sections that frame and further develop this textual/symbolic journey are:

- Section One: Indigenous Issues, Indigenous Pedagogy And Educational Interconnections

- Section Two: Reflections On The Four Domains And Their Proposed Competencies And Skills

- Section Three: Embracing Indigenous Worldview And Quality Learning Environments

In conclusion, I thank you for reading this paper and hope that it creates a space for individual questions, group discussions and ultimately, collective action.

SECTION ONE: INDIGENOUS ISSUES, INDIGENOUS PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATIONAL INTERCONNECTIONS

So, what are the facts? What is the current state of education for Indigenous peoples? Data from the 2011 National Household Survey (Statistics Canada) and the 2014 Auditor General Report of Ontario offers a measurable perspective to begin this section:

- 1,400,685 Indigenous people live in Canada, representing 4.3% of the total Canadian population.

- 851,560 identify as First Nations.

- 451,795 identify as Metis.

- 59,445 identify as Inuit.

- 301,425 Indigenous peoples live in the province of Ontario.

- 28% of the Indigenous population is from 0 to 14 years.

- 18.2% of the Indigenous population is from 15 to 24 years.

- Only 62% of Indigenous adults graduated from high school, compared to 78% of the general population.

- Only 39% of First Nations peoples living on-reserve graduated from high school.

- There is a 20% gap on Grade 3 EQAO reading results (provincial standard achievement) between Indigenous students (47%) and the general population (67%).

The numbers demonstrate that Indigenous peoples have a significantly younger population that is school age, and that the current measures of student achievement are not working. What is needed now is to clearly articulate the reasons for these gaps and find a more inclusive way to define student success.

THE ISSUES

Colonialism, racism, social exclusion, food insecurity, unemployment, poverty, limited access to housing, poor health and a myriad of other issues face Indigenous communities daily (People for Education, 2013; United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, n.d.) and confront Indigenous students to varying degrees. They are the result of policies, programs, people and politics that failed to honour the knowledge, values and skills of Indigenous Nations in Canada. Student achievement for communities of difference (like First Nations, Metis and Inuit ones) is a challenge for schools that do not have the capacity for change. Schools that are not supported with the tools and resources to address these inequities are placed at a critical disadvantage (Malott, 2007; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009b). Thus the results for Indigenous students will continue to improve at a pace that is unfair and unacceptable.

So, how are these issues interconnected with education? They intersect in areas identified in *The School Context Model: How School Environments Shape Students' Opportunities To Learn* (Bascia, 2014). Table 1.0 recognizes those intersections that reflect factors affecting Indigenous student achievement:

Classroom features, teacher communities, school climate and the external environment are broad concepts that are strongly interconnected. The concise

solutions that are multilayered in their approach; however these measures are necessary for respectful inclusion of Indigenous students and their communities (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health et. al, 2009).

INDIGENOUS PEDAGOGY

So, what is Indigenous pedagogy? Who are Indigenous peoples? We begin this section by exploring these terms and their associating nomenclature.

> *Indigenous:* A term that does not have a universally accepted definition. However, the United Nations offers these characteristics; self-identification and acceptance as Indigenous peoples, historical continuity with settler societies, strong link to the land/traditional territoritiest04Ibct systems/

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multileveled questions, storytelling, group talk (formal/informal), appropriate use of humour, and experiential activities (land-based) (Matilpi, 2012; Wyatt, 2009). The classroom environment, as facilitated by the teacher, also requires

emotional, intellectual and spiritual domains of holistic education (Figure 1.0) are to be respected and realized. Children and youth require a safe space that affirms their diversity and identity; where they can be honoured with cultural, linguistic and affirming models that support them. Self-realization and being valued (knowledge, skills) is a key tenet of Francophone communities, and this too is the goal for Indigenous peoples in education. Self-determination and understanding the forces that have shaped where we have come from are essential determinants in Indigenous conceptions of student success (Ismail & Cazden, 2005).

In conclusion, Indigenous issues, Indigenous pedagogy and respective educational interconnections complement the holistic aspects of student achievement described in *Measuring What Matters*. Communities of difference share a vision of success that is highly valuable for all students - a vision based on the recognition that identity, culture, language and worldview are equally critical to literacy, numeracy and standardized notions of assessment.

SECTION TWO: REFLECTIONS ON THE FOUR DOMAINS AND THEIR PROPOSED COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS

I grew up on a First Nation in northern Ontario. I am Ojibwe and a woman. I have been very fortunate in my life to learn about my own teachings and all the beautiful gifts that Indigenous peoples have given to the world. It is important that I self-identify in this section, as the cultural lens that I am referencing is one that comes from my community. There are a multitude of diverse Indigenous Nations on Turtle Island (North America) and my Nation is only one of them. While the heterogeneity of Indigenous peoples is vast, the concept of holism and education as lifelong is a worldview that is shared by all (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Overmars, 2010). In *Measuring What Matters*, the papers focused on health, social/emotional wellness, citizenship and creativity resonate with Indigenous notions of teaching/learning. My intent is to explore these papers using a form of analysis that is rooted in the teachings of the medicine wheel. This is the theoretical framework through which I can make sense of and be respectful of both Indigenous epistemology and the authors of these diverse papers.

THE MEDICINE WHEEL

The medicine wheel is also known as the living teachings. It is a circle of life that is continuous and never-ending. It demonstrates that everything is connected and everything is sacred. All of life is equal. All of life is deserving of respect, care and love. The entry point for discussion is the physical domain. This is where birth of children is located. It is also symbolic of spring, the rising of the sun and the direction of the east. The emotional domain is where adolescence is located. It is also where summer resides, where the sun is at its highest and the direction of south is represented. The intellectual domain is where adulthood makes its home. It is where the season of fall arises, where the sun sets and the direction of the west sits. The spiritual domain is where our Elders/Elderly journey to, it is where winter is steadfast, where the moon makes her appearance and the direction of the north is situated. Each domain reflects aspects of a human being that makes them whole; the east is the physical, the south is the emotional, the west is the intellectual and the north is the spiritual. Balance in each is key. Disrupt the balance and each area of life is affected.

The medicine wheel has a direct relationship to quality learning environments that extend beyond literacy, numeracy and standardized curriculum. It is based in holistic learning environments that are inclusive of the preceding, but, also value the physical (health), the emotional (social-emotional), the intellectual (citizenship) and the spiritual (creativity). Figure 2.0 provides a symbolic model

While all of the health competencies and skills identified in People for Education's paper are critical, there are certain ones that are foundational in Indigenous worldviews. Therefore, each area from Figure 2.1 will be concisely presented with the key competency/ skill listed and/or edited to ensure that it is inclusive of Indigenous communities. It is important to note that this is being done at a macro level and needs to be vetted by individual Indigenous Nations in Canada as part of their right to self-determination in education (Knowles, 2012).

The Physical - Activity For Fitness And Pleasure
• Students develop physical fitness and movement skills needed to participate in diverse activities; fully understanding that the body is a sacred entity.

The Emotional – Understanding of Mental Illness
• Students are informed and understand that mental health issues are a collective concern and that cultural knowledge is a critical support.

The Intellectual – Making Healthy Choices
• Students have a sense of personal responsibility for their own wellness (activity, eating, sleeping, assessing risks) and humbly share these strategies with others.

The Spiritual – Well-Being in Relation to Sexuality
• Students develop and appreciate their own and others sexual identities; knowing that sexuality is a healthy part of being a human and is to be expressed respectfully.

The Emotional Aspect and Social-Emotional Competencies/Skills

Shanker (2014) in *Broader Measures of Success: Social/Emotional Learning* states that, "Instead of seeing reason and emotion as belonging to separate and independent faculties (the former controlling the latter), they [a multitude of researchers] argued that social, emotional and cognitive processes are all bound together in a seamless web" (p. 1). This recognition of interconnectedness as a primary concept in learning and emotional development runs parallel to Indigenous worldviews (Carriere, 2010; Iseke, 2010). Elders, Metis Senators and knowledge keepers in First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities have been relaying these teachings since time immemorial. Traditional education in Indigenous communities valued holism in learning; embedded in this approach is the equity between applied scholarship and emotional intelligence (Lee, 2015; Wildcat et al., 2014). Children, youth, adults and our elderly engaged in a form of schooling that was cooperative, collective and conscientious. Shanker (2014) reflects these Indigenous concepts through exploring the components and impacts of the American-based Child Development Project (i.e. community building activities, engaging curriculum, cooperative learning, literacy development). This preceding endeavour, combined with the Promoting e e s

that society. Sears (2014) takes this notion further by stating that voting is not a primary indicator of civic duty. In fact he emphasizes that, "a well-balanced democratic society requires a range of civic engagement, and since citizens simply cannot spend the requisite time to engage in all areas…they would be better to focus their participation in areas where they have interest and ability to make the most significant contribution" (p. 18). This thought, based in evidence, aligns with the activities of an Indigenous citizen.

With this, we turn our attention to Figure 2.3, which concisely summarizes the draft competencies and skills identified in the citizenship section of the People for Education paper. What follows this model are critical statements that reflect Indigenous conceptions of citizenship.

> The Physical – Civic Knowledge
> - Students learn about their own traditional forms of government and further understand settler governments and their associative rights/responsibilities.
>
> The Emotional – Civic Dispositions
> - Students exemplify the values of their respective Nations and utilize these to become effective citizens in two worlds (Indigenous and non-Indigenous).
>
> The Intellectual – Civic Skills
> - Students acquire culturally-based mediation and problem solving skills as a means to appreciate diverse points of view; knowing when to act (and when not to act).
>
> The Spiritual – Civic Engagement
> - Students engage in human rights and social justice movements that reflect the integrity of all beings and are consistent with their distinct cultural beliefs.

The Spiritual Aspect and Creativity Competencies/Skills
Upitis (2014) in *Creativity: The State Of The Domain* reveals that,

> *New ways of thinking and acting are needed to alleviate the impact of human life on our planet, approaches that will call for creativity and innovation from all disciplines. Over the next few decades, schools will have a crucial role to play. In schools where creativity is fostered, students will develop the intellectual tools to innovate, and also, the passion to direct their skills to problems of global concern (p. 6).*

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Stewardship of the earth and recognition that all of life (and the universe) is
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Schools that are resourced to provide opportunities in critical thinking, student-directed learning, integrated curriculum, and community partnerships are steps towards being inclusive of creativity. However, a focused program on the multiple levels, processes and outcomes of creative thought is needed to "contribute to [all] lives that are joyful, productive, meaningful, and prosperous" (p. 3). So, what does this look like? How do students demonstrate creativity? Figure 2.4 provides this view with a concise summary of the draft competencies and skills identified in the creativity section of the People for Education paper. Following this model

THE SCHOOL

There are approximately 15,500 schools in Canada; of which 10,100 are elementary, 3400 are secondary and 2000 are mixed (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2015). In Ontario, there are 3974 elementary schools and 919 secondary (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). Every school board in Ontario has at least some Indigenous students attending Kindergarten to Grade 12 (People for Education, 2013). The conditions that facilitate Indigenous inclusion in school are as follows (adapted from the *Draft Competencies and Skills,* n.d.):

- School leadership is shared with the teachers, students, the community, and education advocates, with trust and collaboration at the core.

- The school is an open learning space where community members with diverse expertise work with students and staff.

- School based structures are in place to provide support for students (and their families) with a variety of challenges/issues.

- Professional learning for teachers and staff is valued and integrated in evidence- based practices focused on access/equity.

THE COMMUNITY

Standardized definitions of community relegate this term to being a noun and describe it as "people living in one particular area because of their common interests, social group or nationality" (Cambridge English Dictionary Online, 2015). Indigenous definitions of community identify particular participants/ conditions, and these are often verb-based (Carriere, 2010). These descriptions take on a more holistic approach, and are inclusive of all beings (humans, plants, animals, seen, unseen) and the interconnections that exist amongst them. The latter definition is more relevant for a cross-cultural understanding of the community factors affecting expanded notions of student achievement.

The competencies that are fundamental to community and student success are (adapted from *Draft Competencies and Skills*, n.d.):

- Meaningful school-community partnerships and agreements are based in time, reciprocity, trust, respect, relevance, and actualized plans.

- Programs that de-stigmatize mental illness, prevent bullying, and prevent substance abuse are implemented with culturally relevant tools/resources.

- Students develop enriched definitions of community and commit to volunteering in action-oriented projects that reflect those expanded descriptions.

- Monitoring and reviewing of domain competencies in relation to student learning and school practices involve Elders, Metis Senators and knowledge keepers.

THE GLOBE

Global education with a decolonization focus is best described as, "asking new and difficult questions concerning the erasures, negations, and omissions of histories, identities, representations, cultures, and practices [in schools]" (Sefa Dei, 2014, p. 10). This definition aligns with aspects of Indigenous conceptions of global

education; however, the addition of recognizing and living with the earth as our mother will be added here (Overmars, 2010). A quality learning environment that honours global perspectives has these competencies reflected within it:

- Students understand and "confront the conditions and unequal power relations that have created unequal advantage and privilege among nations" (Sefa Dei, 2014, p. 10).

- Promotion of Indigenous earth knowledge and sacred connections to land as fundamental to "developing a sense of purpose…[life meaning]…and social existence" (Sefa Dei, 2014, p. 10).

- Integrating the "idea of pursuing schooling and education as a communal resource intended for the good of humanity" (Sefa Dei, 2014, p. 10).

- Connections with learners across the globe to share experiences and discuss the challenges that these generations face; with creative action as an outcome.

In conclusion, student achievement needs to be reconceptualized to include the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of the whole being. This view is supported through examining respectful conditions/competencies that fully consider the impacts of the classroom, the school, the community and the globe. Indigenous epistemologies and Elder/Metis Senator knowledge can facilitate this much-needed educational change (Lavoie et al., 2012).

CLOSING WORDS

The questions,

- What is inclusion?

- Who are Indigenous peoples?

- What are the issues that face Indigenous peoples?

- How can education be reconceptualized to include Indigenous ways of knowing? And,

- Why should we care?

began this paper and close this textual/symbolic journey together. *What Matters In Indigenous Education: Implementing A Vision Committed To Holism, Diversity And Engagement* is quite simply, the students. This paper is for those young spirits that walk to school, get on a bus, ride the subway, commute and/or reside in educational places that currently (or need to) honour them further. Meaning that we need to move beyond just considering achievement in schooling and look

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DOMAIN LEADS/SECRETARIAT

To ensure that each step of the initiative is based on strong evidence, People for Education has recruited a secretariat of domain experts to oversee and conduct the research components of Measuring What Matters:

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S a S a e (Social-Emotional learning)
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Re a U (Creativity/Innovation)
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This project is guided by an advisory committee, representing leading organizations from across Canada, the United States and Europe, and institutions in fields of relevance to the project.

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