

Central Provinces

For the purposes of this inquiry, we chose to include Quebec and Ontario within the Central Provinces.

Quebec

Quebec's English-language curriculum is competency based and, instead of grade levels, they have cycles through which students progress, with pathways that are more streamed at the secondary level. The flexibility within this competency based curriculum offers teachers room to incorporate content that aligns with this inquiry. The front matter also encourages teachers to deliver authentic learning experiences with a focus on environmental awareness. Most curriculum documents were recently published with 2016 being a common release date.

Quebec's English-language curriculum was the primary source reviewed for this inquiry along with some comparison conducted with the French-language version. Further study of and comparison with the French-language curriculum would be beneficial as would consideration of CEGEP curricula and/ or initiatives in consultation with regional experts.

English (Language Arts)

Quebec's English Language Arts curriculum is embedded within a broader Languages stream that includes French language study and instruction for second language learners; the English guidelines are balanced between specific and open-ended expectations with flexibility for teachers to facilitate authentic learning opportunities. The skills and competencies are specific such as reading, listening, writing, and expressing ideas. Significant flexibility appears with respect to the topics and contexts within which students learn. Notably referencing the critical work of Paulo Freire in the preamble of the English Language Arts curriculum (p. 72), students are encouraged to examine how their views and perspectives are shaped by the media as well as how they express their ideas as producers of media. Language is also examined with respect to how students use it to interact with others and with their communities. Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of texts as well as to engage students with action research to engage in their learning. The English Language Arts curriculum is not a literal translation from its French language counterpart and, while similarities do exist, certain details such as the lack of an explicit reference to Paulo Freire in the French language version are intriguing. An emphasis on language as a vehicle for expanding students' understanding of the world around them is, however, still evident.

As the cycles progress from primary to secondary (similar to elementary and early high school levels), the English curriculum is further identified as a critical literacy program and it ties together the previous cycles to promote lifelong learning. Students also have the opportunity to engage with an independent study, building on their time learning action research process. While there are no explicit curricular connections, the openness of the context for learning and critical literacy focus, teachers could tie teaching English towards authentically engaging in understanding Indigenous environmental topics.

Math

Competency based and following the cycle progression (not grades), the Math curriculum is embedded within a broader umbrella of Mathematics, Science and Technology; it also leaves a balance between focus on skills and an openness and flexibility within particular contexts to develop the skills. The documents are condensed, leaving a teacher the opportunity to visually see the past competencies students have developed to what they are working towards. Additionally, throughout the documents, there are cross-curricular opportunities for teachers to collaborate with others. Within the front matter of Mathematics, Science and Technology in both the English and French versions, there are considerations for the health and well-being of students as well as encouragement to help students to develop environmental awareness. Specific outcomes are not explicitly linked to this inquiry but teachers seem to have room to embed content that could be relevant.

Science

Cycle One in Science has content related to the environment specific to plant growth, animal adaptations to the environment, and consumption of living things and the context for learning is flexible for teachers. Cycles 2 and 3 in both English and French contain references to the importance of acknowledging cultural and historical contexts in shaping societal values with regards to science and technology which could be a place for teachers to link to content related to this project. Additionally, within the strategies and data area, teachers could employ community-based environmental data that could generate learning related Indigenous environmental topics. High school cycles build on the elementary cycles but also incorporate more connections to environmental protection, hunting and fishing, climate change and deforestation, as well as energy production.

Secondary Science is divided into some specialty areas but remains competency focused. The Science and Technology stream offers strong possible connections to this inquiry by way of looking at the history of life on Earth, climate change, the energy challenge of humankind, deforestation, ecology, climate zones, drinking water, and community resource and environmental groups. A Science and Environment stream also provides general possibilities for connection to this inquiry while Chemistry and Physics do not offer any obvious explicit connections to Indigenous environmental topics beyond, for example, consider soil chemistry in relation to an environmental issue.

Social Studies

Quebec's primary and middle school Social Studies (also broadly described as Social Sciences) curricula are contained in one document with high school presented separately. Social Studies also revolves around geography, history, and citizenship with competencies focused on organization, change, and diversity. Quebec's Social Studies curriculum appears to have a research focus as viewed through an academic lens. The competency nature of the curriculum again leaves flexibility for teachers to provide authentic learning experiences for students and engage in current events that have deep roots in our cultures. Indigenous people are mentioned in Cycles 2 and 3 in the elementary levels, specifically the Iroquois, Algonquin, and Inca nations through the era between 1500-1700 within the context of societies. In Cycle 3, students also

study the Inuit and Mi'kmaq as well as colonization, and the assets and limitations of land. There is also a research project.

Cycle 1 in high school looks at human action and social change, including the relationship between humans and the Land. Competency 2 (p. 269) focuses on territorial issues and could be connected to the themes of this inquiry by way of looking at a local Indigenous environmental topic. There are also other places that relate to this project including looking at Indigenous territories, cultural references for landmarks, exploration of forests, global warming, environmental risks, and protected territories. Cycle 2 narrows towards citizenship and history, however there also remains flexibility to tie into this inquiry. For example, a research project into an historical event could be used for students to consider historical Indigenous Environmental Activism.

While we recognize that curricular documents are often evolving, the use of language within curriculum documents has been shown to teach children how language can be used to express ideas, therefore a need to speak to some language used within this subject is necessary. Throughout the English-language Quebec documents, Indigenous people and their territories are referred to by terms that are considered by many to be outdated and offensive such as “the Natives” and “the Native world” (e.g. See p.196 in the elementary curriculum). Interestingly, the term “Autochtones”, which is currently preferred as the French equivalent of “Indigenous”, is employed in the French-language documents (e.g. See p. 181 in the French version of the elementary curriculum).

Additionally, one of the competencies within the Contemporary World supplement for Cycle 2 related to population and settlement studies states:

- From the Native [sic] world around 1500 to present, the designated focus is thus the effects of natural population change and migration on the formation of the population and settlement of the territory. (p. 67)

In the preamble for this competency, the document references the relative decrease in Indigenous populations however, it does not mention the various impacts of colonization as possible causes. Rather, it takes a colonist view and considers settlement and natural growth as well as immigration of Settler populations as primary factors. In addition, the language within this outcome seems to suggest that the first occupants of Quebec appeared around 1500, despite a contradictory statement (p. 36) in Cycle 2's History and Citizenship Education Program suggesting that Indigenous peoples came to North America via the Bering Strait approximately 30 000 years ago. Comparable contradictory narratives are also presented in the French language versions.

The Canadian History stream examines historical turning points and social phenomena, but within a European and American context.

As noted, further comparative investigation into Quebec's French and English curricula would be illuminating.

References

Éducation et Enseignement Supérieur Québec. (2018). *Curriculum and progression of learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/curriculum/>

Éducation et Enseignement Supérieur Québec. (2018). *Programme de formation de l'école Québécoise*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/contenus-communs/enseignants/programme-de-formation-de-lecole-quebecoise/>