

January 24, 2022

Honourable Tom Osborne
Minister of Education
Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education
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Dear Honourable Tom Osbourne,

We thank you for the concern you have publicly expressed about the Grade 9 social studies curriculum, and your commitments to review and replace the racist content about immigration and migrants.

We are members of anti-racist advocacy groups who actively and collectively work to counter all forms of racism and other interlocking forms of oppression, and to promote a culture of anti-racism in Newfoundland and Labrador. We wish to bring our concerns forward about the textbook *Canadian Identity* published in 2011 by Nelson Education. This textbook is used in the Newfoundland and Labrador K-12 Social Studies Curriculum. The assignment titled "How Many Immigrants Should Canada Accept?" appalled us for its harmful racist and anti-migrant narratives.

We should note that although we reference this specific textbook and assignment, we have serious concerns about the adequacy of the K-12 Social Studies Curriculum in general and its treatment of the lived experiences of students who are from immigrant, refugee, Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities in NL. Additionally, the use of this textbook and assignment also calls into question whether the curriculum appropriately addresses other intersecting forms of oppression that migrant, Indigenous and racialized students face, such as sexism, transsexism, homophobia, ableism and classism.

The assignment in question indoctrinates racist ideas in students under the pretense of teaching balanced or neutral facts. Furthermore, the assignment does not provide space or tools for anti-racist critical thinking. This content is a form of curricular violence and puts immigrant, refugee and other racialized students at risk of racist forms of violence, harassment, discrimination and bullying.

We know that years of systemic racist immigration teachings cannot be easily undone. These taught-narratives have already trickled into the world views of many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians where they help legitimate white and colonial supremacist ideas and discriminatory policies. The assignment "pros and cons" act as a racist rationale that justifies the systemic racist exclusion of many immigrants and refugees. Systemic racism shows up in many ways through, for example, exclusion from access to health care, inequitable fees at university, unequal access to social services and workplace exploitation.

Therefore, we ask for immediate and extensive action to start redressing the profound impact on migrant, refugee, Indigenous and racialized communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. We urge the NL Department of Education, NL English School Board (NLESD), Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial (CSFP), and all who participate in the K-12 system to take the following actions.

1. The Department of Education, NLESD and CSFP should:
 - a. remove the *Canadian Identity* textbook from the reading list immediately.
 - b. provide students, teachers and other academic staff a remedial course on how to read for racism in textbooks and other teaching materials.
 - c. issue a statement to past and present students outlining the inadequacies of the textbook and assignment, and their commitments to anti-racist education.
 - d. hire a committee of racialized consultants from immigrant, refugee, Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities in NL to do a full review of the K-12 Social Sciences Curriculum immediately. These consultants must have experience and training in intersectional anti-racist advocacy before they begin their work.
 - e. develop an anti-racist curriculum framework which guides all decisions about curriculum in the K-12 school system, including the choice of textbooks and other teaching tools and assignments. Additionally, we ask that this anti-racist framework ensure that other interlocking forms of oppression, such as sexism, transsexism, homophobia, ableism and classism, are not reproduced.
 - f. re-write the K-12 Social Studies Curriculum, based on this review and the anti-racist curriculum framework.
 - g. actively recruit and retain K-12 teachers and curriculum writers from Indigenous, migrant and racialized communities who have anti-racist training.
 - h. provide funding for professional development and training for current teachers from Indigenous, migrant and racialized communities who are interested in furthering their racial and intersectional anti-racist literacy.
 - i. provide anti-racist training for social studies curriculum writers at the Department of Education and school boards and all social science teachers, principals and other academic staff.
 - j. reconsider its relationship with Nelson Publishing who has demonstrated that it does not have anti-racist, nor content expertise in immigration.
 - k. adopt texts that have local and anti-racist content and reflect the multiplicity of lived experience of students who are from immigrant, refugee, Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities in NL.
 - l. engage a paid anti-racist community advisory board of immigrant, refugee, Black, Indigenous and other racialized communities in NL with anti-racist experience to monitor changes to the curriculum on an ongoing basis. The community advisory board should be responsible for fielding any complaints about racism in the curriculum or educational materials, and to report publicly on the progress of anti-racist curricular review.
2. NL Teachers Association (NLTA) and Faculty of Education at Memorial University should contribute to professional development of teachers to increase:
 - a. racial literacy, taught by immigrant, refugee, Black, Indigenous and other racialized people with anti-racist education expertise.
 - b. knowledge about structural racism, other interlocking forms of oppression, and the immigration system.
 - c. anti-racist curriculum advocacy for teachers who wish to work against reproducing racist and other forms of curricular violence.
3. The Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism should:
 - a. review the K-12 curriculum on all topics related to immigration, citizenship and multiculturalism.

- b. review public literacy efforts about the role of immigration in the province, ensuring that stereotypes, discrimination and racism are not reproduced in any public education materials.
4. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador should:
 - a. issue a public statement about how they will work with the community members and educators in the province to rectify this shameless misrepresentation of immigration and migrants (and especially refugees).
 - b. develop a plan to outline their commitments to reducing racism and white supremacy, including in all educational institutions.
5. Nelson Education, the publishing company, and the authors of the text should be held accountable for their racist treatment of immigration and refugees.

We look forward to hearing back from you about your strategies to achieve positive change on these matters within our K-12 education system. You can reach us by email at antiracismcoalitionnl@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Anti-Racism Coalition Newfoundland and Labrador (ARC-NL)
Healthcare for All Campaign (of ARC-NL)
Black Lives Matter Newfoundland and Labrador (BLMNL)
Migrant Students United-NL Chapter (MSU-NL)
Addressing Islamophobia in NL Project
Indigenous Activist Collective (IAC)
Social Justice Co-Op (SJC)