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# The History of "Francophone Perspectives" in Alberta's Social Studies Curricula (1993–2024)

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ABSTRACT
In 2005, Alberta's ministry of education introduced a mandate to learn about "Francophone perspectives" in its social studies curriculum, from kindergarten to grade 12. This curriculum, which is now under reform, failed to define the terms "perspectives" and "Francophone perspectives;" in addition, it neglected to outline the historical and constitutional reasons that justified their inclusion. This article considers how and why the term "Francophone perspectives" found its way into the Alberta curriculum. I analyzed the draft and final versions of the social studies curriculum since the term first appeared in a 1999 draft, as well as related government consultations and the testimonies of curriculum authors. I argue that Francophone perspectives were recognized and kept their place, despite criticism, due to: 1) unprecedented partnerships between Canadian ministries of education as well as Indigenous, francophone, and anglophone curriculum authors; 2) their mobilization of James Banks's transformative approach to multicultural education; 3) an underlying pluralist vision of Canada as a partnership between francophones, Indigenous peoples, and anglophones; and 4) the authors' protection of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives amidst negative feedback. This article illuminates the advent of the now-popular multi-perspectival approach to social studies in Western and Northern Canada as well as the crafting of new ways to write curriculum in partnership.

RÉSUMÉ
En 2005, le ministère de l'Éducation en Alberta met en œuvre son programme d'études sociales en y incluant le mandat d'enseigner à propos des « perspectives francophones » et ce, de la maternelle à la 12e année. Sujet d'une réforme en cours, ce programme ne définit pas ce qu'est une « perspective », ce que sont les « perspectives francophones » ni les « raisons historiques et constitutionnelles » qui justifient leur apprentissage. Comment et pourquoi ces « perspectives francophones » se sont-elles retrouvées dans le programme albertain d'études sociales ? Pour y répondre, j'ai analysé les versions préliminaires et finales de ces programmes depuis 1999 — année d'introduction des perspectives francophones — en plus d'étudier des consultations publiques à propos de ces programmes ainsi que les témoignages des rédacteurs de ceux-ci. L'inclusion des perspectives francophones et leur pérennité dans les programmes, malgré les critiques, est la résultante 1) de partenariats sans précédent entre les ministres de l'Éducation au Canada ainsi qu'entre des rédacteurs affiliés aux groupes francophones, anglophones ou

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autochtones ; 2) de la mobilisation par ces auteurs de l'approche transformatrice de l'éducation multiculturelle, théorisée par James Banks ; 3) et d'une representation pluraliste du Canada, conçu comme un pays issu d'un partenariat entre francophones, anglophones et Autochtones ; 4) ainsi que de la capacité de ces auteurs à protéger les perspectives francophones et autochtones des critiques. Ma recherche décrit l'émergence de la désormais populaire multiperspectivité en études sociales dans l'Ouest et le Nord Canadien, tout en pointant vers des avenues pour écrire des programmes en partenariat.

## Introduction

This article explores the trajectory of the term "Francophone perspectives" in the draft and final versions of three Alberta social studies curricula published since the end of the 1990s. This "curriculum story"[1] recounts the process by which the three social studies curricula were developed and the context in which they were produced; it describes the people involved and the ideas they mobilized. The inclusion of Francophone perspectives was rather unexpected in these curricula, considering that Alberta is mostly known for being an English-language-dependent province[2] — a place where English-French bilingualism is criticized by a significant portion of the population[3] and where anti-Quebec (anti-francophone) sentiments are found.[4]

In this article, I demonstrate that "Francophone perspectives" emerged and kept their place in curricula — despite criticism — for four reasons. First, it was because of unprecedented partnerships between ministries of education and curriculum authors affiliated with Indigenous, francophone, and anglophone groups. These created the curricular conditions for innovation starting in 1993. Second, it was because of the mobilization of James Banks's transformative approach to perspectives integration in curricula. This mobilization favoured the integration of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives throughout social studies curricula, and not only in specific places.[5] Third, it was because of an underlying vision of Canada as a partnership between francophones, Indigenous peoples, and English-speaking groups that justified the recognition of specific perspectives throughout curricula. Fourth, curriculum authors were able to secure recognition for Francophone and Indigenous perspectives, despite criticism garnered during consultations.

The trajectory of Francophone as well as Indigenous perspectives acts as a reminder that it is possible to produce curricula differently in Alberta and elsewhere in Canada, both in terms of content (multi-perspectival approach) and in curriculum-writing practices (partnership).

The history of how the term Francophone perspectives came to be included in Alberta's social studies curricula is not well known. It is found mostly in the work of graduate students.[6] Compared to the literature on the ways in which teachers engage with Francophone and Indigenous perspectives in the Alberta social studies curricula, the story of their appearance and persistence in curriculum has yet to be told. That is why a curriculum story is needed.

Evidence for this story derives from an analysis of government policies (for example, guidelines for curriculum development); draft and final versions of three social studies curricula[7]; reports from government consultations that gathered Albertans'

views on these curricula; and published testimonials from curriculum authors.[8] I outline possible reasons for changes and continuities in sentences containing the term "Francophone perspectives" across various draft versions of three curricula, with a particular focus on the introduction sections. To explain these changes and continuities, I cite testimonies from curriculum authors, research by other scholars, and suggestions from government reports. In sum, I aim to explain why Francophone perspectives were first acknowledged in the introduction section of social studies curricula related to Alberta in the 1990s, why these perspectives have remained despite criticism, and what conditions facilitated this.

A goal of this article is to make explicit "the very stratum of presupposition underlying curriculum development."[9] Also referred to as programs of study, the curricula under investigation can be defined as "legal documents that spell out what students are expected to learn and be able to do."[10] I understand them as "racialized texts" that encompass what Castanell and Pinar define as "debates over who we perceive ourselves to be, and how we will represent that identity, including what remains as 'leftover,' as 'difference.'"[11] In other words, curricula present a story of "us," as Dwayne Donald observes, that acts to reinforce certain borders between groups of humans and their ecosystem.[12] Finally, I understand curricula as the result of political endeavours,[13] or negotiations over "who gets what" in education.[14]

To investigate the origins and persistence of Francophone perspectives in Alberta's social studies curricula since the 1990s, I follow the line of questioning of social studies educator Ruth Sandwell, aligned with Raymond Williams's observations that "any curriculum is a selection from the culture of which it was part"[15]:

> Many Canadians have experienced a heightened awareness of the problems associated with history [and social studies] and have asked key questions about the[se] discipline[s]: Whose history counts? What people, events, and issues get to be included in social studies and history classrooms? Who and what are left out? And who decides these things?[16]

## Developing Unprecedented Partnerships in the 1990s

### *Ministries of Education Convened to Produce a Common Curriculum*

The 1990s were an unprecedented time for partnerships in Canadian education. The origins of those partnerships lie in events that took place thirty years earlier. Advocacy for interprovincial and territorial partnerships[17] to jointly decide on common learning goals for students began at the end of the 1960s. The creation of the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada in 1967 acted as a catalyst to bring together interests in curriculum matters. In 1978, the council observed that "all provinces, despite inevitable differences in curriculum policy resulting from regional diversity, were interested in 'identifying common elements in the curriculum, sharing information systematically and in increasing the coordination of their curriculum-related activities.'"[18] To meet the "common" educational needs of Canadians,[19] as well as to

protect their prerogative over education in the face of federal government intervention,[20] all of Canada's ministers of education under the council's leadership signed the Victoria Declaration in 1993. Partnerships such as those the Victoria Declaration outlined (for example, the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education [WCP]) opened unprecedented opportunities for innovation in common curriculum writing.[21]

For these ministers to come together in the 1990s to propose a common curriculum was a novel act of partnership. Section 93 of the British North America Act, Canada's original 1867 constitution, assigned to the provinces the exclusive power to make laws in education. (Eventually the territories also achieved this power.) Until the 1990s, that prerogative had resulted in the production of different curricula in each jurisdiction. Via the 1993 Victoria Declaration, novel partnerships between provinces and territories emerged. The declaration created the conditions for innovation in the hiring practices for curriculum writers, conceptualization of content to be included in common curricula, and consultation methods to gather feedback from stakeholders.

Building on pre-established ties among the western provinces, the 1993 Western Canadian protocol represented Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, and Yukon.[22] The common curriculum crafted for these jurisdictions sought to reduce the cost of educational resources. It provided incentives for publishers to produce textbooks on a large scale, and to respond to the issue of student mobility.[23] Curriculum authors affiliated with distinct provinces or territories within the protocol worked together for the first time to craft common programs of studies in mathematics, language arts, and international languages, as well as social studies.[24] The term "Francophone perspectives" first appeared in the 1999 draft social studies common curriculum.

The gains in the rights of francophones through the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the enforcement of these rights by the Supreme Court of Canada in its 1990 Mahé decision, created an incentive to accommodate francophones in the Western Canadian protocol.[25] One way that the protocol responded to official minority language educational rights as well as the growing influence of francophones in many ministries of education since the 1970s[26] was to commission the production of a common curriculum written in both English and French, as well as to hire French-speaking curriculum authors.[27] The production of this common social studies curriculum would come to challenge previous anglophone dominance over curriculum writing in Canada[28] outside Quebec through a partnership between francophone, Indigenous, and anglophone curriculum authors from the outset of the design process.[29]

### *A New Partnership Between Curriculum Authors*

The process of developing the protocol's common social studies curriculum started in 1996 with the hiring of francophone and anglophone consultants. The first two groups of consultants then recommended the inclusion of Indigenous authors.[30] Such a transformation was a response to the ways in which Indigenous peoples had

been negatively portrayed by institutions such as schools and their inability to influence educational matters.[31] As noted by Manitoba anglophone consultant Linda Mlodzinski:

> From the very outset of the interjurisdictional project, there was a recognition among all team members that previous approaches to curriculum development in which dominant, mainstream Anglophone culture created the curriculum, could no longer work in current culturally diverse times.[32]

Mlodzinski explained the transformation in the process of curriculum development to reporter Ray Conlogue for his article titled "The Great War for Our Past":

> If we look for balance, it's because the social tenor of the times cries out for it. We're not making it up, it's reality. The multicultural groups that were marginalized are mad as hell. We see that everywhere. Not too long ago, she says, anglophone programmers would make up a curriculum and then send it to native and francophone educators for comment. But now we all sit down at a table together with blank paper in front of us and make a curriculum together. Is that bad?[33]

Conlogue's article provides context for Mlodzinski's quote by referring to the ongoing "canon debates" in the United States during the 1990s. Those debates revolved around American universities' liberal arts curricula[34] and asked whether there was an overemphasis on learning about the works of "Dead White Males."[35] According to their critics, including those in the multicultural education movement (for example, James Banks), these curricula were inconsistent in recognizing the increasingly diverse student population.[36] Consequently, some already marginalized students could not see themselves or the groups to which they belonged in the curricula that guided their learning.[37]

Conlogue also cited Canadian historian Jack Granatstein, who represented a counterpoint to this critique by decrying the lack of emphasis on learning about a unifying group of Canadians in light of the increasing number of references to minority group perspectives in history curricula.[38] Accordingly, the production of the protocol's common social studies curriculum reflected the tension observed in the canon debates between fostering commonalities—a "Canadian spirit"[39]—and acknowledging a "multi-perspectival" approach to social studies education.[40]

Mlodzinski's observations were corroborated by two other francophone representatives[41] and scholars.[42] Partnerships between three equal partners at the curriculum-writing table was unheard of in Canada and acted as a springboard for decisions based on a process of consensus-building according to Mlodzinski:

> In order to be truly reflective and equal in nature, three co-leads—Aboriginal, Anglophone, and Francophone—managed the project.… In general, agreements were reached through a process of consensus decision-making, no small

> feat considering meetings would often involve a committee as large as 24 members.[43]

The protocol's francophone consultant from Manitoba, Renée Gillis, reports that the intended purpose of the project was to reflect diverse and authentic voices and "to meet the educational needs of all three groups, and to encourage greater intercultural understanding among these groups [Indigenous, anglophone, and francophone], as well as among other ethnocultural groups in the West and North."[44] In reviewing the curriculum designers' comments as well as details from government consultations, one finds little to no direct political interference from ministers of education in the curriculum design process.[45]

Gillis observes that it was precisely "because of the inclusion of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit representatives on the WNCP committee [that] Aboriginal perspectives were to be included in the ensuing Framework."[46] The same is true for the inclusion of Francophone perspectives, which similarly emerged because of the partnerships at the curriculum-writing table rather than any direct political involvement from ministers of education.

## Mobilizing Banks's Transformative Approach

### *The American Origins of Francophone Perspectives*

Alberta was a pillar of the protocol's social studies curriculum. At the outset, the authors of the protocol's common curriculum requested three literature reviews from Alberta's ministry of education to inform their work.[47] These literature reviews focussed on francophone education,[48] Indigenous education,[49] and trends in social studies research written in English, mostly from the United States.[50] The first two literature reviews focussed on the needs of specific groups of students in social studies, while the third did not. Accordingly, the subsequent common social studies curriculum identified francophone and Indigenous curriculum authors, perspectives, and students, by explicitly naming them. A third group that was difficult to identify, which Mlodzinski marked as "Anglophone," thus became a silent partner to these proceedings. The origins of the protocol's multi-perspectival approach to social studies are found in the literature review on Indigenous education.

To argue for the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives within the protocol's social studies curricula, Phyllis Cardinal, the author of the 1999 literature review of Indigenous education, cited James Banks, a pioneer of multicultural education. At that time, Banks had just produced an influential model for integrating content about marginalized groups into curricula.[51] His model scaffolded the integration of minority perspectives in curricula from "the contribution" approach (through the inclusion of learning about a group's heroes) to "the transformative" approach.[52] This latter level involved students learning about perspectives and groups and the ways in which they transformed their society; this type of learning was intended to take place every year. Since it reflected the ways in which the curriculum was conceived, the protocol's authors chose to apply the transformative approach as a

rationale for including specific perspectives.[53] Curriculum authors used the transformative model not only to add content about Indigenous peoples and francophones throughout the curriculum, but to highlight how these groups have structured Canadian society.[54]

The literature review of francophone education mentioned that content about French speakers was not integrated throughout social studies curricula in Canada, except in Quebec.[55] Rather, this content was included through what Banks called an additive approach, in a separate section of the curriculum. The review's author, Denise Stocco, argued for a more systematic inclusion of content about francophones — in line with Banks's transformative approach — while downplaying the intersections between Indigenous and Francophone perspectives. These two sets of perspectives were treated in isolation from one another in subsequent versions of the curriculum.

The protocol's team of francophone, Indigenous, and anglophone authors published their first text, the *Western Canadian Protocol Foundation Document*, in 1999. The document revealed its authorship by stating that "Aboriginal and Francophone representatives" worked as "full and equal partners" for the "first time in Western and Northern Canadian history in the production of common school programming" — the authorship of anglophone representatives was not mentioned and thus they remained silent partners.[56] In line with Banks's transformative approach, the document also mentioned for the first time the need for students to "appreciate and respect English language, Francophone, Aboriginal, and multiple cultural perspectives" and to "understand how they have shaped Canadian society."[57] The curriculum thus set out to highlight these three groups by naming them, while collapsing all others into the "multiple" category.

The mandate to learn about multiple named and unnamed perspectives reflected various American influences. Required actions such as to "appreciate and respect" certain perspectives reflected the affective learning domain of Bloom's taxonomy, which had been present in Alberta's social studies curricula since the 1970s.[58] Reference to "multiple cultural perspectives" was inspired by the mention of that concept in the 1994 (American) National Council for Social Studies' Curriculum Standards.[59] References to how these perspectives had shaped Canada replicated the language used in Banks's transformative approach.

## Recognizing Specific Francophone and Indigenous Perspectives

### *Stakeholders' Feedback and "Non-negotiable" Inclusion of Perspectives*

In 1999, a first round of consultations gathered feedback from educational stakeholders from the protocol's jurisdictions. Separate consultations with francophone and Indigenous representatives reflected the influence of the document's curriculum authorship model.[60] Negative feedback from the consultations had a profound effect on the mandate to learn about Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. Since the curriculum authors were able to assert authority in interpreting the feedback, they treated the inclusion of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives as non-negotiable, despite criticism.[61] Accordingly, the document upheld the acknowledgement of

Francophone and Indigenous perspectives; however, the term English-language was erased and instead "multiple perspectives" were highlighted.

A common report on all jurisdictions' consultations advised the protocol authors to be cautious of "being viewed as… exclusionary" in naming certain perspectives and not others.[62] Such logic was apparent in a synthesis of thirty-six comments gathered in Alberta: "too much emphasis on Aboriginal and Francophone while ignoring or at the expense of others and Canadianism as a whole."[63] The consultation reports suggested that curriculum authors "place greater emphasis on a multicultural view of Canada."[64]

In response, the curriculum authors erased mentions of English-language perspectives and instead foregrounded the terms "diverse cultural perspectives" in sentences related to the multi-perspectives approach to social studies (Table 1).

**Table 1.**
**A comparison of the revisions to a sentence using the term perspectives between the draft and final versions of the *Foundation Document*.**

| Draft *Foundation Document* (1999) | Revised *Foundation Document* (2000) |
|---|---|
| [The Framework] will be reflective of Aboriginal, English language, Francophone, and multiple cultural perspectives. | The Framework will be reflective of diverse cultural perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, that contribute to Canada's evolving realities. |

The document's authors erased references to the English language group in response to criticisms such as this one: "while Aboriginal and Francophone reflect identifiable groups, the term 'English language' does not."[65] Manitoba francophone author Renée Gillis observes that such erasure was made "to give a higher profile to multiculturalism, an idea that came up during the consultations," while "seeming to take for granted the perspectives of this [English-speaking] majority group that had defined the 'Canadian reality' to which Indigenous and Francophone people contributed."[66]

Alberta's francophone curriculum author, Daniel Buteau, recalls a story that highlights both the inner workings of the curriculum authorship model and an explanation as to why the "English language" perspectives were erased:

> I got here and was told, 'Well, you are leading an interprovincial project. We want to meet the needs of Francophone students and you have to write a database of learning outcomes with other provinces. And we are going to reflect Aboriginal perspectives, and Anglophone perspectives, and Francophone perspectives. Okay. So I took that on and one day I heard 'No, we are not Anglophones.' So… okay. Anglophones don't exist.[67]

The comments by Buteau and Gillis, both francophone authors, highlight the way interference at the curriculum-writing table can be difficult to identify, and suggest that some feedback could have come from other curriculum authors or ministry representatives.

A participant in the consultations stated that teachers were not endorsing the *Foundation Document* because they viewed it as privileging two groups over others: "If you bring the Aboriginal [peoples] and the Francophones into the curriculum, how do you sell it to teachers? How do you get them to buy into it? It's almost a mini Charlottetown Accord."[68] The 1992 Charlottetown Accord to which this participant referred proposed to acknowledge francophones (especially Quebecois) and Indigenous peoples in the Canadian constitution through references, respectively, to their distinct status and their rights to self-government.[69] Some Canadians rejected the accord because of a perceived injustice to other provinces and territories if Quebec and Indigenous peoples gained distinct status.[70] In that sense, the *Foundation Document*'s proposition to distinctively acknowledge Francophone and Indigenous perspectives, groups, and students, as well as the criticism it received (that is, why "them," but not others?), echoed the larger Canadian constitutional debates of the time.[71] However, since the consultation process for the curriculum was not bounded by a constitutional referendum, the curriculum authors were able to mitigate negative feedback while acting to protect the recognition of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives.

***Importing Perspectives as well as the Partnership Model to Alberta***

The addition of Nunavut in 2000 due to the creation of that territory, the departure of British Columbia (BC) in the same year, and the departure of Alberta in 2001 transformed the newly named Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP). The remaining jurisdictions (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut) finalized the common curriculum in 2001 and released it in 2002. The authors of the common curriculum went on to propose specific innovations (for example, in Nunavut[72]) that were implemented in most of the protocol's jurisdictions, such as the mandate to learn about Francophone and Indigenous perspectives.[73]

The reasons for BC's and Alberta's departures from the protocol were never entirely clear. However, representatives of the BC government were some of the most vocal opponents to the recognition of named perspectives in the foundation document, and they stopped contributing to the curriculum after 1999. Of all the original protocol jurisdictions, the curriculum eventually implemented in BC featured the least recognition of named minority groups, which points to that opposition as the likely reason for the province's departure.

Meanwhile, Alberta's departure from the protocol was justified at the ministry of education level by "the slow pace at which the curriculum process was moving" and the "large discrepancy [between the protocol's stakeholders which] made it difficult to negotiate a shared curriculum."[74] However, when Alberta's representatives started to create their own provincial social studies curriculum, they were obviously influenced by their experiences in the protocol.[75] The francophone, Indigenous, and anglophone consultants who had participated in the protocol were hired to develop Alberta's new social studies curriculum.[76] Moreover, these consultants imported the protocol's mandate to learn about certain distinct perspectives.

***Justifying the Inclusion of Francophone and Indigenous Perspectives: Canada as a Tri-pillar Partnership***

Based on their experience with the protocol, francophone, anglophone, and Indigenous authors began to write a new Alberta social studies curriculum in 2001.[77] Their first version included a mandate to learn about different perspectives, albeit with a refined rationale compared to the protocol's stated goal of fostering a "Canadian spirit" among students. Rather than emphasizing Canada as a multicultural state, Alberta's curriculum designers referred to the country as a partnership between certain culturally diverse groups, mainly francophones, anglophones, and Indigenous peoples. This description of Canada served to legitimize the need to include the perspectives of these partners as objects of study in the curriculum, as well as to include francophone, Indigenous, and anglophone authors of the prescribed learning outcomes. Contrary to a multicultural approach, which would have emphasized equality between a greater number of perspectives, this approach — albeit modified along the way — came to be known as pluralism in the official curriculum launch in 2005. It gave specific attention to two sets of perspectives, Francophone and Indigenous, based on a view of Canada as a tri-pillar partnership.

In the first draft of Alberta's social studies curriculum published in 2002, a particular view of Canada was proposed, compared to the one offered in the protocol:

> Alberta's new social studies program recognizes that Canada is a partnership between culturally diverse Aboriginal Canadians, culturally diverse English-speaking Canadians and culturally diverse Francophone Canadians. Each of these groups enjoys collective rights that are rooted in Canadian history, entrenched in Canada's constitution, and protected by Canadian law. To maintain Canadian unity, it is essential to promote mutual recognition, understanding and cooperation among these partners. One strategy to do so is to explore topics and issues from diverse perspectives. The new Social Studies program will do this by integrating Aboriginal and Francophone perspectives with those of other Canadians. By exploring divergent visions of Canada's national story, the various partners in the Canadian federation can maintain a dialogue with each other, learn from one another, and work together to build a Canada in which all citizens feel a strong sense of belonging.[78]

This paragraph reflects a vision of Canada as a tri-pillar partnership[79] and suggests that the goal of social studies is to foster mutual recognition among these partners through learning about the partners' perspectives. However, much like in the protocol, the authors had difficulty naming the need to learn about the perspectives of the (silent) partner: English-speaking Canadians.

The major change from the protocol was the description of English-speaking Canadians in a section that mandated students to learn about "Canadian Peoples" — including Indigenous peoples and francophones. The protocol authors had not described these English-speaking peoples and had erased their perspectives along the way. Linked with twenty-two cited countries of origin, English-speaking

Canadians' commonalities were described in Alberta's draft 2002 (June) curriculum as follows: "Common to these Canadians is their use of English as their everyday language in public space."[80]

### *The Silent Partner: Erasing English-speaking Groups, While Protecting Francophone and Indigenous Perspectives*

In the August 2002 curriculum draft, the authors replaced references to English-speaking Canadians with a section titled "culturally diverse groups of Canada."[81] The authors used almost identical definitions for this new group as they had used for English-speaking Canadians but they erased a sentence stating that culturally diverse Canadians shared "English as an everyday language in public space." As a result, the authors reproduced the protocol's process of erasing mention of anglophones from the curriculum, while protecting the place of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives.

More broadly, the deletion of one half of Canada's "bilingual character" undermined the curriculum's conceptual framework. It nullified the possibility of fostering "mutual recognition" between English- and French-speaking Canadians and Indigenous partners. The changes made in the summer of 2002 remain unexplained compared to those made in the protocol. However, a hypothesis emerges from a 2005 interview with anglophone curriculum designer Shirley Douglas, who shared what she called "a moment of individual enlightenment as to her Anglophone privilege"[82] during the years of writing the curriculum. In reflecting on her personal growth through working with Indigenous and francophone curriculum authors during the five-year design process, Douglas confided her realization that "life had been a peach for me… being raised English speaking. Never had an issue of my point of view or perspectives. An unexamined life and unexamined experiences."[83] It was only through regular contact with the francophone and Indigenous curriculum designers that Douglas became aware of the privileged position that allowed her to ignore her anglophone status, while her colleagues were always reminded of their Francophone and Indigenous status. At the start of the project, Douglas might have objected to the use of the anglophone label, since she took it for granted. The disappearance of anglophone perspectives from the curriculum is congruent with Douglas's "unexamined life and unexamined experiences" thesis.[84]

## Securing Recognition of Francophone and Indigenous Perspectives

From that 2005 interview with Douglas, it also becomes clear that the other interviewees — Daniel Buteau, the francophone designer, and Debbie Mineault, the Indigenous designer — played an essential role in securing the place of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. Both Buteau and Mineault affirmed that their presence at the curriculum-writing table protected the distinct acknowledgement of their groups' perspectives, amidst criticism against their recognition that was gathered during the consultations. There is little to no evidence of political interference in the curriculum-writing processes, which suggests that the curriculum authors had the power to write a program of studies in alignment with their groups' interests.

In fall 2002, the Alberta government held a consultation on the August draft, which involved more than 1,400 people and mirrored the 1999 protocol consultations. As a legacy of the protocol, francophones and Indigenous peoples attended consultation sessions specifically designed for them, conducted in French, Indigenous languages, or English.[85] Like the protocol consultations, the first point noted in the 2002 consultation report concerned the presentation of distinct perspectives: "Respondents supported the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives, Francophone perspectives, and multiple perspectives," but criticized the curriculum, which "lacked a sense of recognition for multiple perspectives."[86] A more in-depth view of the report, however, shows many criticisms directly addressed the recognition of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. It suggests that the report could have been written (the authors are unknown) to legitimize support for those perspectives. Much like the protocol, the 2002 consultation report advised authors, in the context of criticism of acknowledging specific groups, "to ensure that the concept of multiculturalism was being included in the program of studies."[87]

***Modified Rationale to Justify the Inclusion of Specific Perspectives: Pluralism***

Instead of following the suggestion to add more multiculturalism to the curriculum, the authors of the August 2002 draft mobilized the concept of pluralism. They stated that the idea of Canada as a partnership remained important, although they failed to name the partners:

> By exploring Canada's pluralism, partners in Canadian society will maintain a dialogue with each other, learn from one another and work together to build a Canada that celebrates its partnerships and enables all citizens to feel a strong sense of belonging.[88]

Canada's "pluralism" became the main justification for the mandate to learn about multiple perspectives, including those of francophones and Indigenous peoples. Pluralism was defined in the curriculum as building "upon Canada's historical and constitutional foundations, which reflect the country's Aboriginal heritage, bilingual nature and multicultural realities."[89]

As an overarching concept, pluralism encompassed — but could not be reduced to — multiculturalism. The main difference is that pluralism recognizes that diverse groups in Canada have distinct "historical and constitutional" assets, whereas multiculturalism promotes equity of status among Canadian groups. Like earlier versions of the curriculum produced since 1999, the rationale for acknowledging Francophone and Indigenous perspectives included francophones and Indigenous peoples as integral parts of Canada and its constitution and the needs of students from these groups.

***Historical and Constitutional Reasons***

In the official social studies curriculum implemented in 2005, the only place where francophones are defined is in the glossary for Grade 4. A francophone is "a person

for whom French is the first language learned and/or still in use; a person of French language and culture."[90] This definition echoed the one provided in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms for francophone rights-holders. It highlighted the influence of "constitutional reasons" in justifying the need to learn about Francophone perspectives and experiences. Unlike earlier versions, however, broad definitions of the groups and the reasons why all students should learn about Francophone perspectives were no longer provided in the curriculum. (The 2002 version had included some reasons, such as to "introduce and instill an appreciation of the multi-ethnic and intercultural nature of the Canadian Francophonie."[91]) The benefit of learning about these perspectives and experiences was now mainly stated for francophone students only. While francophones were defined in a constitutional manner, perspectives were not defined anywhere in the curriculum, although one textbook author reported that "Alberta Education has defined 'point of view' as a view held by a single person. A 'perspective' refers to the shared view of a group or collective."[92]

***Extending the Recognition to Francophone and Indigenous Perspectives***

Successive reforms since 2010 have led to the Alberta government's current heavily criticized attempt to revamp its social studies curriculum. Unlike the protocol days and the development of the 2005 curriculum, the most recent reform was heavily partisan. The current reform was initiated under a Progressive Conservative government, via the Alberta Ministry of Education's 2010 *Inspiring Education* report, "as a response to the changing needs of students in the 21st century."[93] The election of an NDP government in 2015, which resulted in the final demise of the Progressive Conservative Party after it had governed Alberta for forty-four years,[94] accelerated the reform and writing of these curricula.[95] In 2016, the NDP announced a 2020 target for the K–4 curricula in six subjects: arts, science, math, language arts, wellness, and social studies.[96] Successive reform attempts that were unparalleled in scope (that is, in the unprecedented concurrent reform of six subject areas) created a hub for curriculum innovation that favoured an expansion of the acknowledgement granted to Francophone and Indigenous perspectives—similar in a way to the partnerships of the 1990s between ministries of education.

Within the reform period overseen by the NDP (2015–2019),[97] the six new curricula were required to include references to Indigenous and Francophone perspectives due to constitutional obligations, but also in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.[98] Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the aligned educational rights of francophones were now more specifically defined as a rationale for the acknowledgement of Francophone perspectives. The NDP government's biggest commitment may have been to develop these curricula simultaneously in French and English, a project already at the heart of the protocol's common social studies curriculum but now applied to other curricula as well. Henri Lemire, an experienced French school board superintendent in Alberta, was pleased with this commitment: "In the past, it took as long as two years to translate new curriculum into French.… Alberta's been trudging with this far too long. The minister, this morning, wants to correct something."[99]

The NDP government released the first French and English drafts of its six curricula in 2017–2018, each with an introductory section dedicated to francophones and Indigenous peoples and stating a requirement to learn about their perspectives in arts, science, math, language arts, wellness, and social studies. It is unclear from the sources that exist if the reform included Indigenous, francophone, and anglophone representatives as equal partners at the curriculum-writing table; however, the result of the reform was an extension of previous work to acknowledge distinct perspectives, this time across six subjects. Although the pluralist rationale was presented as the motivation for including Francophone and Indigenous perspectives, the core pillars of "historical and constitutional reasons" to legitimize their presence were kept, now in the name of the Canadian Charter and reconciliation.

***Abandoning the Curriculum Partnership and Pluralist Approach***

The 2019 election of the United Conservative Party (UCP) in Alberta drastically altered the curriculum reform. During his 2019 election campaign, UCP leader Jason Kenney stated:

> We will stop the NDP's ideological rewrite of the school curriculum, and we will consult with parents and experts … to develop a modern curriculum that is focused on essential knowledge and skills instead of political agendas and failed teaching fads.[100]

The UCP government's curriculum reform has since been widely criticized by teachers and education experts.[101]

Anglophone-centric ways of writing curriculum — denounced since the days of the protocol — resurfaced, resulting in a decreased acknowledgement of francophones in the curriculum, particularly in social studies. An advisory committee hired to review the reform did not include any francophone education experts, and unsurprisingly, they produced a report that failed to mention francophones.[102] This committee issued a new draft of the Ministerial Order for Student Learning to guide the reform, which also omitted any reference to francophones.[103] Criticism from francophone Albertans ensued in an attempt to re-secure their place in the curriculum.[104] The Minister of Education subsequently stated in a letter that the Francophone community "continues to be a precious partner for the Alberta educational system."[105] The UCP also included a reference to "Alberta's Francophone history" in the final ministerial order published in December 2020.[106] The capacity of francophones to mitigate the erasure of their perspectives in curricula was also diminished at the ministry level by the abolition, under the NDP, of the Francophone Bureau, which had been responsible for overseeing curriculum-making matters.[107]

The guide for the new UCP-supervised framework document to write the social studies curriculum contains references to francophones similar to the framework produced by the NDP. However, the rationale for those references is more focussed on francophones' presence in Alberta, such as French being "the first European language spoken in the land that is now Alberta."[108] For social studies, the framework for

reform prioritized the perspectives of "local Indigenous and Francophone communities," but also those of "Albertans of European, African, Asian, and Middle Eastern descent; and newcomers from various parts of the world."[109] This formulation reflects a response to a long-lasting request by many Albertans during previous consultations to include more perspectives in the curriculum.[110] It also reveals a move to localize francophones within Alberta, rather than considering them to be a pan-Canadian group, a change from past curriculum reviews.

To describe francophones, the 1999 *Foundation Document* focussed on their "increasing rate of assimilation [leading] to a sense of cultural ambiguity."[111] After 2002, Alberta's curricula focussed on the rights and status of francophones in a bilingual Canada, while more recent drafts referred to the contributions of francophones to Alberta. Over the years, curriculum writers gradually reduced recognition of the anglophone-dominated environment in which francophones live, while erasing any mention of anglophone groups in the introductions to the curricula. Although this anglophone-dominated environment remains acknowledged within scholarly research, it is no longer part of the conversation within the curriculum itself.[112] Francophones are now recognized in the curriculum as rights-holders, but the reason they acquired these rights in the first place — the anglophone-dominant environment in Alberta[113] — has mostly disappeared from curricula.

## Protecting Francophone Perspectives

C. P. Champion and Paul Bennett, the consultants who successively coordinated the writing of the first versions of the UCP-supervised social studies curriculum in 2020 and 2021, had no affiliation with Francophone or Indigenous groups.[114] Critics argued that the new drafts of the social studies curriculum (and others) are racist, age-inappropriate, plagiarized, and lack Francophone and Indigenous perspectives.[115] As a result, many Alberta school boards (fifty-six out of sixty-one), including the four francophone boards, refused to pilot the curriculum.[116] Since it did not include such perspectives, critics argued that the piloting phase of the curriculum could not be considered representative of Alberta's education landscape.[117] The demise of the curriculum-writing table that incorporated the voice of francophones likely contributed to the backlash from francophone stakeholders, who felt voiceless in the new process.

Signs of collaboration have emerged in response to recent critiques. After the 2022 fall Alberta election, Demetrios Nicolaides was named the new education minister, and he announced a rewrite of the social studies curriculum with new and more sustained partnerships, including with francophones.[118] Backlash from many Albertans, as well as the Northwest Territories' decision to abandon its use of Alberta's social studies curriculum, forced the government to reaffirm the reform's legitimacy. This backlash against the UCP-supervised reform created new opportunities for francophones and the recognition of their perspectives. A recent "blueprint"[119] for the social studies curriculum revealed that the government was seeking partnerships and listening to stakeholders, according to the president of Alberta's francophone school boards.[120] The blueprint advised the curriculum writers to add more content about

francophone heritage and culture, cultural celebrations, pluralism, contributions, settlements, and history.[121] Shortly after, results were released from consultations with more than 30,000 Albertans that highlighted criticism against the previous draft for reasons including the downplaying of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives.[122] As reported by education journalist Janet French, "Alberta's new education minister will return attention to the new social studies curriculum, with plans to meet soon with teachers, Indigenous leaders and francophone representatives."[123] With this new round of consultations, Education Minister Nicolaides says he is trying to gather "more perspectives" to make a stronger social studies curriculum — an approach that, in style, reflects the spirit involved in the development of the protocol and the 2005 curriculum. The substance and effects of these consultations remain to be assessed.

## Conclusion

Francophone and Indigenous perspectives have kept their place in Alberta's social studies curricula since 1999 amidst negative feedback gathered during consultations. This curriculum story outlines the four reasons why, and the trajectories of how, these perspectives became acknowledged and kept their place in curricula. Outlining these reasons and their trajectories is important for understanding the arrival and maintainance of the now widely popular multi-perspectival approach in social studies, as well as the curricular recognition of Indigenous peoples and francophones in Western and Northern Canada.

Unprecedented partnerships, first between ministers of education, and second, between curriculum authors, explain the first wave of acknowledgement of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. Writing a common curriculum as part of the Western Canadian protocol meant that new modalities for writing curricula emerged in collaboration with new partners across Western and Northern Canada. This created the conditions for innovation. Once upon a time, anglophone writers wrote curricula and consulted with other stakeholders afterward. The original partnership of Indigenous, francophone, and, for lack of a better term, anglophone curriculum authors shows how curricula can be produced differently. This moment in curriculum history is important to study because it shows how and why, under certain conditions, approaches to writing curriculum can change.

Interestingly, it was an American model (Banks's transformative approach) — albeit a Canadianized version — that inspired the inclusion of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. This model also inspired the inclusion of the concept of cultural perspectives, which first appeared in the 1994 (American) National Council for Social Studies' Curriculum Standards.[124] However, neither the transformative approach nor the standards proposed teach the same set of perspectives (that is, Francophone perspectives) from one grade level to another. Rather, they suggested selecting the perspectives most appropriate to the topic being studied.[125] This article reveals how the protocol authors Canadianized Banks's approach by requesting systematic acknowledgement of the same perspectives across grade levels. Therefore, this article contributes to a long line of studies, including those by historian Penney

Clark, that document the Canadianization of American approaches to social studies education (such as Bloom's taxonomy, standards, or Banks's approach).[126]

This article relied on a methodological comparison of draft and final versions of curricula, which provides a method that other historians of education could use to uncover the political nature of decisions about what students must learn, why, and from whom, as well as how these decisions change in response to public consultations and governmental leadership. One benefit of this comparison was that it enabled me to observe both the continuities and changes in the vision of Canada used by curriculum authors to legitimize the recognition of Francophone, Indigenous, and, for two brief moments, Anglophone perspectives. These rationales evolved from fostering an undefined Canadian spirit to sustaining a tri-pillar partnership, to focusing mostly on pluralism or Alberta's current and historical realities. For instance, the history of Francophone perspectives in Alberta reveals the pros, cons, and tensions between a "three equal partners" conceptualization of pluralism compared to a multiculturalism framework that places many groups on an equal footing. These rationales, such as pluralism, act a reminder that curriculum, as many scholars have observed, is a story about "us" that evolves through time via boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

This research historicizes the inclusion of the multi-perspectival approach in social studies curricula in Western and Northern Canada, especially in Alberta. Doing so reveals the possibilities (and possible backlash) emerging from the acknowledgement of previously marginalized perspectives and the contributions of curriculum designers from diverse backgrounds. The backlash results from the difficulty inherent in acknowledging Anglophone perspectives, as well as obtaining broad endorsement from Albertans for the recognition of Francophone and Indigenous perspectives. Faced with multiple critiques and several rounds of revisions to the mandate to value these perspectives, francophone and Indigenous designers and educational stakeholders, by their presence at the curriculum-writing table or their advocacy, seem to have secured recognition of their groups' perspectives and ensured continuity between versions of the curricula.

Accordingly, this curriculum story has exposed and described the growth of the politics of presence within social studies curriculum-writing practices in Western and Northern Canada, and especially in Alberta. Political philosopher Anne Phillips argues for a crucial change in the ways just policies are enacted in liberal democracy, namely moving from the politics of ideas to the politics of presence.[127] In this context, the politics of ideas means that curriculum designers would have committed to including Francophone and Indigenous perspectives in accordance with the idea of fairness, but the designers would not have been francophone or Indigenous themselves. Because of an unsatisfactory response to the injustice inherent in the politics of ideas — who should make the commitment and on behalf of whom? — the politics of presence slowly gained traction in social movements, as exemplified by the Western Canadian protocol's hiring of francophone and Indigenous curriculum designers. That presence carried on in Alberta's social studies curriculum reform in 2002. The latest round of reforms and the ensuing backlash highlight how old ways of writing curriculum can easily resurface by excluding francophone, Indigenous, and other

important stakeholders from the curriculum table.

As this curriculum story has revealed, acknowledging Francophone and Indigenous groups provides an alternative to the old ways — it redistributes power to marginalized groups and makes them not only partners but equals in curriculum-writing practices. This acknowledgement sets a precedent toward a fairer redistribution of power between groups in Canadian (social studies) curriculum development.

## Notes

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54 Gillis, "Une histoire au pluriel."
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