Proposed Alberta curriculum is cause for concern

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A series of proposals for Alberta's K-4 social studies curriculum leaked to the CBC have been roundly criticized by experts for downplaying the horrors of residential schools while emphasizing tenets of Christianity, in addition to relying on outdated educational philosophies.

Keith Barton, an education professor at Indiana University, said adopting the new proposals would make Alberta a "laughingstock", while University of Alberta education professor Carla Peck said "it would be embarrassing."

During last year's election, the UCP vowed to order a re-do of the updated K-12 curriculum that was in the process of being piloted, which they claimed was riddled with political bias.

The proposals suggest deferring teaching students about residential schools until the kids are "more mature and are less emotionally vulnerable to traumatic material." However, the document proposes teaching residential schools as one example of "harsh schooling" in Grade 9.

In Grade 1, kids will learn about the "three great religions that worship one G-d" ---Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

"All three are built on the idea that G-d revealed himself to humans ('revelation') who have the capacity to discover the truth about Him," the draft reads.

The draft was written by a 17-member panel appointed by the government and includes controversial history writer, and former staffer to Premier Jason Kenney when he was a minister in Ottawa, Chris Champion. Champion once called the push to incorporate more Indigenous perspectives in curriculum an "ongoing fad".

In the Grade 3 section, the draft says it has removed references to 'equity', because it's "probably a politically partisan and charged buzzword."

University of Alberta education professor Dwayne Donald, who's from the Papachase Cree Nation, says it's troubling that "these kinds of experts" were consulted on the curriculum, the contents of which he described as "racist."

Donald was also harsh in his criticism of what he says is the draft's antiquated approach to learning, with its emphasis on memorization, which he said should be of concern to anyone with children in the public education system.

"Really, what it does, is it takes the complexity of human experience and everything we've learned about teaching and learning, and flattens it," he told the Red Deer Advocate.

"Children are framed as these empty vessels that need to be filled up with facts and dates. There's no allowance for understanding children as being pretty intelligent and able to express themselves in multiple ways. None of that is there."

As early as Grade 1, students would learn about Creation, reading biblical verses as poetry, while teaching Grade 4 students that most non-white Albertans, which it identifies as those from China, Japan, South Korea and the Philippine's, are Christian.

In a section on teaching Grade 3 students about the Judeo-Christian, First Nations, Métis and Inuit traditions, it says FNMI cultures "are often themselves influenced by Christian social teaching."

For Grade 4, the draft proposes teaching "how Christian marriage differed from Roman marriage; e.g. women kept their maiden name in the Middle Ages (sic)."

A section on teaching Grade 1 kids about land has a segment that is crossed out on using oral history, stories and agriculture, in addition to teaching about sustainability and different ways of using land. Whoever crossed it out writes that it "sounds like mysticism."

"One could equally say 'water sustains everything', or 'the fire of the Sun', or 'Oxygen', or 'the Holy Ghost'," they wrote. "All would be true in their way."

Although the Indigenous community criticized the leaked proposals, there were no public comments expressing concern from the non-Christian community in Alberta.

"I'm surprised that there has not been an outcry from the Alberta Jewish community regarding the proposed infusion of religious teachings into the Alberta curriculum," says AJNews publisher Deborah Shatz.

"It seems sadly ironic that while the curricular proposals are minimizing the education of Alberta's students about the horrors of Indian Residential Schools, they are at the same introducing more religious dogma."

Education Minister Adriana LaGrange said the draft merely contains recommendations, not all of which will be ultimately adopted, emphasizing that teaching about residential schools is "non-negotiable. Advice is advice - it's not final," said LaGrange, who also acknowledged some of the proposals "aren't even realistic."

Leader of Opposition Rachel Notley called on the government to disband the panel that wrote the draft. "Whether it's blending church and state or forcing children into rigid, outdated memorizing rituals, this government has selected advisers who want to take our education system backwards," said Notley.



OUR NEW BRAND & VISUAL IDENTITY ARE MUCH MORE THAN A NEW ICON AND TAGLINE, IT'S ISRAEL'S FUTURE.

Over the previous decades, many of you technological and environmental light have grown up with our logo featuring three colours - blue, green, and brown. Blue for water, green for environmentalism, and brown for land. They defined JNF Canada's raison d'etre. Together, we have contributed to Israel's successful rise from its once fragile state to a

among nations.

As Israel has developed, JNF Canada has also evolved. Building on our environmental mission, we have also identified the need to address the lack of charitable social service infrastructure for the people of Israel to survive and thrive.

WHY DID JNF CANADA REDESIGN ITS LOGO?

We did more than just redesign our logo. Guided by the consultants at Blueprint, we spent many months reflecting on who we are and what our core proposition was to our supporters. What makes JNF Canada unique? Our answer is that JNF is the only Canadian charity that, together with our generous donors, are "Building the Foundations for Israel's Future." We help build charitable projects that are essential to enhance and enrich the lives of Israel's citizens in every part of the country.

In every generation, Israel's needs change. In pre-statehood, the need was to purchase land for the early pioneers. After the state was established, there was a focus on forests, gardens, and lookouts. As the population grew, Israel experienced water shortages so reservoirs were required. These needs have been addressed, thanks in part to the success of our work. More recently, JNF Canada has become more involved in social

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Building Israel Together

JNF builds strong communities for Israel's future. JNF projects help people live better by linking the generosity of Canadians to the environmental and social infrastructure needs in Israel. We have supported community growth for generations, and we passionately carry our historic mission forward for a strong and sustainable future. JNF is the goto organization for those who want to connect with and build a better Israel together.

infrastructure projects like community centres, playgrounds, rehabilitation facilities and youth centres. While our environmental mission will remain a priority, we are excited to also support these vitally important social service needs, in collaboration with a variety of agencies and charitable organizations.

The new JNF Canada logo is not a rejection of the past, rather we embrace it. The values at the core of JNF Canada have not changed. The key message of our new visual identity is that we are forward-looking, dynamic, creative, and modern while respecting our beautiful past. We are inspired by the founder of modern Zionism, Theodore Herzl, who dreamed of an Old-New Land -Altneuland. JNF Canada will continue to honour the values and traditions of our past as we turn our eyes forward to building the foundations of Israel's future, together.

The Blue Box (Pushke)

Made up of the four pillars and the coin slot above, this modern representation of the Blue Box is a powerful symbol of JNF Canada's long fundraising history and the enduring support of our donors.

The Pillars

The four pillars represent strength and upward growth. This will also be used in our design system to represent buildings, as a core element of our brand "Building Israel Together".



Welcome to your perfect venue

Our Visual Identity

Our new logo is made up of an icon and uses the acronym JNF. This reflects how most people inside and outside the organization colloquially refer to us. We will still use Jewish National Fund of Canada on formal and legal documents.

Our icon is full of meaningful symbols:

The Colours

JNF Canada's new visual identity convevs Israel through the use of blues and white. The focus of our work is exclusively directed toward Israel and no two colours exemplify Israel more than these.

The Leaf

We replaced the tree from our previous logo with a young leaf sprouting from a branch. It is a nod to our environmental history, our ongoing commitment to environmental projects, regeneration, and new beginnings. We have been connecting Canadians to Israel for decades, but still perceive ourselves as young and dynamic.

With the new branding also comes a revitalized approach to fundraising and many exciting and meaningful building project opportunities. We look forward to sharing these (and more of our new look) with you in the coming months!

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: EDM@JNF.CA 780.481.7881 | 403.255.0295 CALGARY@JNF.CA