



NEWS RELEASE

BC curricula for Grades 1 to 12 lacking in Canadian history

April 25, 2024
For Immediate Release

VANCOUVER—The curriculum guides for British Columbia elementary and high school students are lacking in Canadian history content, leaving it largely up to individual teachers’ interpretation, with a disproportionate focus on historical discrimination – failing to give students a solid foundational knowledge of the nation’s past, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“It is important that all BC students learn the history of Canada, just as it is surely desirable that anyone seeking Canadian citizenship should have a basic understanding of our country’s past,” said Michael Zwaagstra, a Fraser Institute senior fellow and author of *Canadian History Untold: Assessing the K-12 Curriculum Guides in British Columbia and Ontario*.

The study analyzes the Canadian history content in both the Ontario and BC curriculum guides for grades 1 to 12, and finds that the amount of Canadian history required to be taught to students is limited.

In BC, from kindergarten to Grade 8, the only years during which students are taught even some Canadian history are Grades 4 and 5, and these curriculum guides focus heavily on discrimination. In Grade 4, students learn about early contact between Europeans and Canada’s First Peoples, the fur trade, and the factors behind British Columbia’s entry into Confederation. In Grade 5, students learn about the development and evolution of Canadian identity, the changing nature of Canadian immigration policy, and past discriminatory government policies and actions, such as residential schools for Indigenous children, the Chinese head tax, the Komagata Maru incident, and the internment of various people.

Students are taught about these same discriminatory incidents again in Grade 9 and in Grade 10. Aside from these examples, the curriculum guides are sparse on actual facts students are required to learn. Students in Grades 11 or 12 aren’t required to learn any Canadian history in order to graduate high school.

“The new social studies curriculum in British Columbia makes it unlikely that BC students will learn much about the history of Canada, except for examples of discrimination,” Zwaagstra said.

“Focusing on big picture ideas without filling in the necessary details is a recipe for an inadequate education that fails to prepare BC students for life in Canada.”

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