Religion Matters:

The Case for Teaching About World Religions in New Brunswick

by

Laura Côté

Bachelor of Education, University of New Brunswick, 2001

Bachelor of Arts, St. Francis Xavier University, 1999

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Supervisor: Dr. Alan Sears, Faculty of Education

Examining Board: Dr. Kirk Anderson, Chair
Dr. Theodore Christou

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DEDICATION

For their unconditional love and affection, this report is dedicated to Isaac, Aidan, Bryan, Dawson, Rachel, and Kaitlyn; and to Joanna and Sean, who welcomed me as a member of their household when I needed a room in Fredericton.

ABSTRACT

This report examines the implications of Canada's changing cultural landscape for relations among various cultural groups in Canada and for education. While the federal and provincial governments have policies affirming a diverse, multicultural country, attention to religious diversity if often neglected in ensuring these policies are achieved. The vision and goals of every education department or ministry across Canada include a multicultural component designed to help the students become effective citizens. As with the more general policies in this area, attention to religion is often neglected here as well.

With a changing Canadian cultural landscape, there is a growing need to include religion in the curriculum. This report argues that an education that includes knowledge, understanding, and a critical examination of the multiple religious observances and practices in Canada is essential for helping students be better citizens in a pluralistic society, particularly in considering Canadian laws and policies that are being challenged on religious grounds. In order to consider the best approach to an education that includes serious attention to religion, this report examines policies and practices in regards to religious programs in other countries such as Sweden and Britain, and in other provinces such as Alberta and Ontario. Finally, this report includes a curriculum for a grade 12 course entitled World Religions 120. This curriculum incorporates the recommendations of educators who have developed essential outcomes for best practices in religious education based on research and implementation.

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Canadian (and New Brunswick's) Cultural Landscape

The May 4, 2009 edition of *Macleans* reported on an Angus Reid Strategies poll indicating religious tolerance levels in Canada. According to *Macleans*, Canadians are very limited in their tolerance levels for Sikhs, Jews, and Muslims: ". . . fewer than one in three Canadians can find it in their hearts to view Islam or Sikhism in a favorable light," despite, according to the article, the Canadian perception of multiculturalism as "an ingrained national creed" (Geddes, p. 20). Canada, in the last twenty years, has had an enormous increase in immigration and as a result, cultural and religious diversity. In 2010, Statistics Canada released a report on demographics in Canada. They indicate that by 2031, one in three Canadians will belong to a visible minority (Friesen, *The Globe and Mail*). Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism, announced that in 2011, Canada has welcomed its highest number of immigrants in fifty years (Canada Immigrant, 2011). Across Canada, immigration is changing the cultural landscape. Toronto is considered to be one of the most multicultural cities in the world.

While most immigrants end up in Canada's urban areas, more rural provinces like New Brunswick are slightly culturally impacted by immigration. The 2006 Census indicates that 1.9% of New Brunswick's population was made up of visible minorities (Department of Finance, 2006). While this number is only approximately 13,000 out of a total provincial population of about 700,000, New Brunswick's landscape will continue to change over the next several years. While the population of New Brunswick that affiliate themselves to Scottish, Irish, British or French ancestry are declining, the Aboriginal population in New Brunswick is climbing and New Brunswick's government

has an accelerated program to bring in skilled workers and business owners from around the world, most of whom are from South Asia, China, and the United States, while others are from Latin America, the Pacific, and Arab countries. Considering data from the last census, there was a 41.6% growth of visible minorities in the five-year period of 2001 to 2006 (Department of Finance, 2006). New Brunswick's growth is dependent on a specific policy aimed at skilled workers and business owners or managers. Conrad and Steel (2004) reported at a conference in St. Andrew's, New Brunswick, that ". . . New Brunswickers have shown little interest in welcoming refugees, of which there are many in the world, nor is there much enthusiasm for greatly altering the province's ethnic and cultural make-up" (p. 36). Conrad and Steel argue that New Brunswick needs a better immigration policy and that more residents of New Brunswick need to be more accepting of cultural change in the province (p. 37).

Nationally, the 16.2% of the Canadian population of visible minorities suggests a much more pluralistic country in the years ahead. While being a member of a visible minority does not necessarily mean religious affiliation, an Ethnic Diversity Survey, conducted by Statistics Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage, found that ". . . 4 in 10 (41%) of the immigrants who arrived in Canada between 1982 and 2001 had a high degree of religiosity, compared with 26% of people born in Canada" (Statistics Canada, 2006, May 2). Recognizing that a higher immigrant population will also mean a higher degree of religious pluralism in Canada, it is reasonable to expect Canadians to have some understanding of different religions, and to be willing to live in harmony with members of different religious persuasions. Considering Canada's democratic values, ". . . justice demands the public recognition and accommodation of diversity . . . The

desired end then, is not only knowing, but also willingness to adapt, to accommodate, and to advocate for accommodation" (as cited in Peck and Sears, 2005, p. 102). While New Brunswick will probably not experience a similar degree of religious pluralism in the very near future, the fact is that there are several residents in New Brunswick who are affiliated to a religion other than Christianity. As well, considering that New Brunswick is dependent on an aggressive immigration policy to help the province grow, a negative attitude toward cultural change (and possibly change in religious orientations) will be detrimental to growth in this province. Finally, New Brunswick students are being educated with the intention that they can be good citizens, not just in New Brunswick, but wherever these students decide to live.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation commissioned the Environics Research Company to survey Canadians about multiculturalism, and, particularly, discrimination. Their report concludes that one in three Canadians believe that various cultural and religious groups in Canada face discrimination. Not surprisingly, Jews and Muslims were included in groups many Canadians consider targets of discrimination. A question raised by this report was the role of religion within multicultural groups. Interviewed in a CBC web article (2010), Tarek Fatah, founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress, questioned why Muslims were even considered among the list of cultural groups. He argued: "Discrimination in this country is essentially a race issue. If the Muslim is white, nobody has a problem. If the Muslim is black, people are petrified. So in the end it is a question about colour, not religion" (Hildebrandt, 2010). In contrast to this view, the May 9, 2009 article in *Macleans,* disputes Fatah's claim. Indeed, their report suggests that discrimination in this country most definitely includes issues of religion. Environics

Research Group conducted a survey in 2007, and of the 500 adult Muslims they interviewed, the questions and responses indicated a sense of discrimination that was not limited to race. Instead, the questions and responses included race, ethnicity, and religion as components of discrimination. As well, 38% of these Muslims surveyed reported that they felt that Canadians do not have a positive impression of Islam (Adams, 2007, March, slide 20). In comparison, the survey reported that 39% of other Canadians indicated that they did not have a positive impression of Islam.

In an Angus Reid poll conducted in 2009, 1,002 random Canadians were asked about how they view other religions. One question asked about their level of knowledge: 86% said they have a "good basic understanding of Christianity; 32% made the same claim regarding Islam, 18 per cent for Hinduism, 12 per cent for Sikhism, 32 per cent for Buddhism, and 40 per cent for Judaism" (Geddes, 2009, p. 22). Although Canadians gave themselves relatively high scores for their knowledge of these religions, John Geddes, a *Macleans* editor, believes that ". . . it's a stretch to imagine that a third of Canadians really have a solid grounding in Islam . . . more likely, the higher reported levels of "good basic understanding" actually represents superficial impressions gleaned from news reports, combined with images – both negative and positive – picked up from popular entertainment" (p. 22). Regardless of the knowledge Canadians perceived themselves to have, the majority of them surveyed in the Angus Reid poll opposed the idea of officially acknowledging religious holidays, opposed veiled voting, Islamic sharia law, the funding of Christian schools, and opposed polygamy (p. 22). In a secular country that officially separates state and religion, opposition to these religious beliefs and practices may be considered democratic; however, there is a great deal of concern

that this opposition is based on discrimination rather than on a democratic principle. For instance, the Angus Reid poll found that 44% of Canadians "would not want their child to marry a person of the Jewish faith. Even fewer would be comfortable with a Sikh or a Muslim (p. 22). Sweet (1997) identifies a significant component of the democratic system "to be a marketplace of ideas and see that those who want another option are free to have it" (p. 113). Opposition to elements of cultural and religious identity contradicts this apparent support for multiculturalism that many Canadians claim to have. This opposition may be due, as Geddes (2009) suggests, to a lack of a real understanding of each of the various cultures represented in Canada, particularly of the religious identity of many of these groups.

Brian Gates (2007), Professor of Religious and Moral Education at the University of Cumbria, Chair of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales, and Deputy Chair of the European Association for World Religions in Education, argues that an education that includes religion would better prepare children as citizens of a multicultural society (p. 22). This type of education, according to Gates, would not only instill in students a local, national, and global "cultural awareness", it would also help students understand how the variety of perspectives in a multicultural society impact on "political, social, and moral decisions" (p. 15). Bageant (2007) believes that ignorance on religious matters "makes large numbers of people easy marks for unscrupulous politicians and corporate money-grubbers (as cited in Noddings, 2008, p. 387). Noddings (2008) responds to this concern with the recommendation that critical awareness must become a priority in education to all members of society (p. 387). Peck, Sears, & Donaldson (2008) concur; they argue that "[e]ducation has been one of the principle

vehicles for accomplishing the paired goals of accommodating diversity while maintaining social cohesion" (p. 88). The work of Peck and her colleagues illustrates that while the government, with public policies and curriculum documents, attempts to use the classroom as the means to instill cultural awareness and critical understanding of multicultural perspectives, these intentions are falling far short of being met due to the poor development and implementation of curricular expectations (p. 82-3).

Defining Religion as a Component of Multiculturalism

Will Kymlicka (1998) defines multiculturalism as "how political and social integration should occur in a way that respects and accommodates diversity" (p. 70). Ideally, government laws and social environments including schools would be equitable to all cultures, and promote respect for difference. The Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute provides a comprehensive definition of culture. Culture is a way of life that includes language, the "medium of expression;" arts and sciences, "forms of human expression;" thought, "the ways in which people perceive, interpret, and understand the world around them;" spirituality, "the value system;" social activity, "the shared pursuits within a cultural community;" and interaction, "the social aspects of human contact" (Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute, 2001). Culture is a learned component of society, and as Mahatma Gandhi argued, "No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive" (Gandhi, 2011). The question is how religion applies to this idea of culture and accommodation of diversity. For many people, the culture of a particular group of people does not just consist of race, language, traditions, and customs, it also consists of religion.

Religion is the expression of spirituality identified as a characteristic of culture. The American Academy of Religion, a professional association of more than 9,000

teachers and research scholars who teach in over 1,500 colleges, universities, seminaries and schools within and beyond North America, provides a perspective of religion that links to culture: "Religion is the tie that binds a community together through various forms of belief and practice. It is an institution that contributes important ideas to society at large; it also connects with specific aspects of non-religious social life, like economics and politics" (Association of American University and Colleges, 2009). It would be difficult to find a cultural community with no connection to religion. Even in the most secular of societies, for example, France, there are still links to religion through festivities, holidays, and ceremonies. Finally, religion is often cross-cultural in that it does not necessarily identify with only one culture. While some societies politically identify with one official religion; for example, the Islamic Republic of Iran; other societies are influenced by a variety of religions, and many religions have spread among several cultural societies. For example, El Salvador and Greenland are two countries with very different cultural characteristics except that they both share a high percentage of the population who identify with Christianity.

Specific to religion, Quinlan (2001), in the Oxford University Press textbook, *Exploring World Religions*, provides multiple definitions of the word. Included is a quotation by Allan Menzies that "Religion is the worship of higher powers from the sense of need" (as cited in Quinlan, p. 5). Emile Durkheim's definition is that "Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things – things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (p. 5). Finally, the Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines religion as "The belief in a superhuman controlling power; esp. in a personal God

or gods entitled to obedience and worship" (p. 5). The Ontario Ministry of Education, in its 1994 report on "Education About Religion in Public Elementary Schools," provided two definitions of religion: "those beliefs which guide and determine an individual's attitude and behaviours regarding the value, purpose and meaning to life," and "a means of ultimate transformation – personally, socially, or cosmologically" (Introduction section, Problems in Defining Religion, para. 3). The most descriptive definition is from the British Broadcasting Corporation (2011), whose website on Religion defines religion: ". . . as a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs."

These last three definitions effectively and appropriately characterize religion, particularly considering that most Canadians would identify Buddhism as much of a religion as Hinduism or Islam. Buddhism is unique in that the teachings of the Buddha were non-theistic, so many definitions of religion would possibly exclude Buddhism. Buddhism does not deny the idea of deity, but the teachings of the Buddha concentrated on daily living. While Buddhists are only approximately 1% of the Canadian population, there are approximately 350 million Buddhists worldwide, and in Canada, the Buddhist population has increased to 300,000 followers in the last twenty years, a significant presence validating a need for Canadians to increase their knowledge of Buddhism (Geddes, 2009, May 4, p. 23). Finally, characterizing religion as transforming attitudes and behaviours is appropriate because it is a crucial argument for many parents who desire their children to receive religious education. These parents adamantly believe that

schools instill values and morals, and these parents want their children at schools that will instill the values and morals specific to their religious beliefs.

Religion determines how people within particular religious traditions will live their lives. Lois Sweet (1997) argues that religion and culture are not only connected, but that for many people, religion is culture (p. 4). Her rationale is that religion "dictates the way they view the world, including their neighbours, how they dress, what they eat, and how they spend their time and money" (p. 4). In other words, religion provides many Canadians with a particular viewpoint on how and why they live. Sweet (1997) thinks many Canadians are inaccurately assuming that all Canadians share the basic assumptions of life. This is a problem for Sweet, particularly in regards to established laws in Canada that might violate religious beliefs of a particular group of people. It is also a problem for education because education encompasses knowledge of the world and the way humans should live and interact with the world. If different groups of people have different assumptions of life, then education could possibly teach knowledge that is contrary to the viewpoints of particular religious traditions. Noddings (2008) believes that while some public schools attempt to teach religious tolerance, these courses "avoid the critical discussion of beliefs and refer to religious wars and persecutions with delicacy, often treating them as anomalies" (p. 370). This is a problem for Noddings because she believes that students often only gain some religious tolerance, but remain intolerant or ignorant of other varieties of belief or non-belief (like agnosticism or atheism) (p. 370). It is essential then, that education is open enough to examine various viewpoints of life, and would best occur within courses that offer these viewpoints.

Gates (2007) argues that effective religious education "involves initiation into an understanding of religion as a human, self-transcending phenomenon" (p. 15).

Government Laws and Policies on Religion in School

In 1988, the Parliament of Canada adopted the *Multiculturalism* Act (Bill C-93), which, in part, states:

> 3. (1) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to
>
> (a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;
>
> (c) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation;
>
> (f) encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character . . .

(Dewey & Leman, 2006).

This Act clearly recognizes the diversity of religion and the importance of preserving the different religions in Canada as well as achieving equality for all religious groups within Canada. Although there is a federal policy on multiculturalism, education is under the jurisdiction of the provincial governments. As a result, there are many interpretations of how multiculturalism applies to education. Several provinces to date have their own multiculturalism policies including British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia (Dewing & Leman, 2006, p. 12). Part of New Brunswick's multiculturalism policy, as outlined by the Government of New Brunswick (2007), is to ". . . increase public awareness and understanding of the multicultural composition of New Brunswick society through educational initiatives" (Objectives for

Action section). This complements the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which declares:

> Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (United Nations, 1948, Article 26)

These provincial, national, and international policies suggest a firm commitment to teaching Canadians how to have respect for all cultures through education.

Contrary to the policies, the manifestation of religion is limited in many ways in public schools. Hughes & Sears (2006) argue that little support has been provided to foster these multiculturalism policies through education: ". . . Canada, and particularly the provincial ministries of education, have been dabblers, providing little, if any, substantial capacity for implementing their policies" (as cited in Peck, Sears, & Donaldson, 2008, p. 68). Many students and parents across Canada feel they cannot participate fully in their cultural life in public schools. They feel there is unequal treatment of different religious traditions. In particular, Section 93 of the Constitution makes all laws relating to education the exclusive responsibilities of the provinces. It also guarantees the rights of any denominational schools which were already in existence when the province joined confederation. For most provinces, this meant protection for Christian schools, specifically Catholic and Protestant. Currently, three provinces and one territory still exercise this right to protect public funding for Christian schools. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and the Northwest Territories all have both publically

funded Catholic and Protestant schools. Of all the current schools, only a couple Protestant schools continue to claim their religious nature, while most have become regular public schools. The Catholic public schools in all three provinces and the Northwest Territories continue to operate with religious instruction and celebration of Mass. As well, while there is public criticism of providing separate Catholic education, the Catholic school boards and professional associations strongly advocate for preserving Catholic education.

Considering today's population, the allowance of only Christian publicly funded schools and not any other schools suggests that Canadian laws are reflecting the values of a demographic that does not exist in the same way it did when this section was written. The Constitution is not necessarily unalterable, however, as demonstrated in Newfoundland. Newfoundland held a referendum in 1995 on the school system. The government of Newfoundland, after receiving a majority 'yes' vote, asked the federal government to change the terms of Confederation in order to remove the various churches' ability to legally challenge any changes to the education system that would affect denominational schools (Bergman, 1995, p. 14). According to Bergman, "The boards would still have the power to establish denominational schools where numbers warrant and, the government insists, would be able to retain religious instruction and activities in all schools" (p. 15). In 1997, Newfoundland went even further, passing a resolution to entirely abolish church-run schools. This change occurred and the *Terms of Union of Newfoundland with Canada* in the *Newfoundland Act* newly stated: "17. (1) In lieu of section ninety-three of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, this Term shall apply in respect of the Province of Newfoundland:

(2) In and for the Province of Newfoundland, the Legislature shall have exclusive authority to make laws in relation to education but shall provide for courses in religion that are not specific to a religious denomination.
(3) Religious observances shall be permitted in a school where requested by parents."
2. This Amendment may be cited as the *Constitution Amendment, 1998.*
(Constitution Amendment Proclamation, 1998)

Similarly, Quebec requested that the power to establish denominational schools as stated in Section 93 of the Constitution be removed. The Quebec government made the decision that all schools should no longer provide religious instruction. Instead, every school in the province was mandated in 2009 to teach the course, "Ethics and Religious Culture." This course is similar to the Ontario World Religions course which teaches about multiple religions around the world and how it links to cultural identity. The Quebec Premier, Jean Charest, would make no exceptions despite complaints from French nationalist groups who declared that this multicultural course lessened the ability to promote French nationalism and from Catholic parents who desired to have their children receive Catholic instruction. The government of Quebec has had more difficulty than the other provinces in responding to the influx of immigration and the impact this has on Quebec's desire to maintain a distinct cultural society. In 2007, Quebec received a lot of media attention due to the government-commissioned public consultation on "reasonable accommodation." The government was responding to accusations of "indirect discrimination" due to laws and policies protecting Quebec's desire to maintain the "unique cultural and linguistic characteristics that unite Quebec society" (Steinbach, 2010a, p. 536). Quebec's school system was confessional in nature, in that many schools were based on the Protestant/Catholic foundation provided in Canada's 1867

Constitution. As well, any family moving to Quebec was required to send children to French-language schools.

Prior to changes to its education system in regards to Section 93 of the Constitution, Quebec had established an interculturalism policy which is technically very similar to the multiculturalism policies of the other provinces; however, they also continue to endorse their own linguistic and cultural identity (Steinbach, 2010a, p. 536). Nugent (2006) believes that Quebec chooses the term, "interculturalism" instead of "multiculturalism" because they believe that the connotations of "multiculturalism" deny "Quebec's status as a distinct and national minority within Canada" (p. 536). Quebec's use of the term, interculturalism, suggests that different cultural groups interact and exchange ideas, while multiculturalism arguably suggests that there are several cultural groups living in the same country but not necessarily interacting. Their approach to multiculturalism is also found in their education system. In Quebec, intercultural education is ideally "an effort to develop a better understanding of different cultures, a greater ability to communicate with people of other cultures, and positive attitudes towards other groups" (p. 537). Despite this policy, research conducted in Quebec classrooms found that three themes emerged from its students: an assimilationist attitude toward any non-Quebec (non-French, non-Christian) student, with the desire for these students to "act like us"; a sense of protectionism toward their own identity, with the belief that these students are "losing our culture"; and a practice of exclusion, with the sense that there are "two separate worlds" in each school where the "only social contact is confrontation" (pp. 539-541). While these problems exist in schools across Canada, Quebec's 2007 government-commissioned report did note the importance of "increased

teacher preparation in the area of diversity" as well as a course on multiple religions to inform students and promote an open mind as a means of promoting interculturalism, which began to be implemented in 2009 (Steinbach, 2010b, p. 96).

In contrast to these changes in Newfoundland and Quebec, the Northwest Territories, Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan have held on to the constitutional right to denominational schools. Of these, Ontario and Alberta have done so despite their growing pluralism. Other religious denominations have the right to their own schools, but are not funded by the government. Historically, these provinces protected separate denominational schools because these schools were seen as:

> A way to maintain some publicly controlled uniformity while also recognizing the validity of certain minority rights . . . with the result that the Canadian practice, generally speaking, became one of subsidizing the education of some religious minorities in confessional, separate, and dissentient schools. The accommodation of these minorities was made for educational, not religious reasons, conceding thereby that the parent is an important agent of education and that schools should be responsive to parent demands in matters relating to moral and religious education. (Sweet, 1997, p. 29)

Currently, these publically-funded schools only represent one religious minority in provinces where there are several religious minorities. The question then becomes whether other religious minorities should also have the right to an education rooted in their religious principles subsidized. In the Ontario Provincial election of 2007, when the Conservatives proposed public funding of other religious denominations, the majority of the public opposed this proposal. An Environics poll at this time found that 58% of

Ontarians opposed this proposal even if these schools would meet the provincial education standards and requirements (Leebosh, 2007). While the right to subsidize education for all religious denominations is worth debating nationally, it would be a challenge to find support in a climate that lacks knowledge or experience with ethnic diversity. The paradox is that any beneficial debate depends on informed opinions; however, with the limited religious education available across Canada, the opinions they share may be ill-informed.

Section 93 of the Constitution seems hypocritical to Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which states that every person is equal before and under the law, and has equal benefit of the law without discrimination based on, among other things, religion (as cited in Sweet, 1997, p. 32). Provinces that provide funding for denominational schools need to reconsider how they fund public education, particularly how equitable this funding is in regards to non-Christian religious groups. Some would argue that it would be preferable to provide funding for multi-religious courses in the regular public system instead of having denominational schools. Joan Flood, former chair of the Essex County Board of Education, brought up in a Catholic home, was outspoken in her role as chair, and later as mayor of Essex, that education should not be divided into separate school systems (Sweet, 1997, p. 49). She believed that Ontario should eliminate publicly funded Catholic schools in favour of one public school; yet the Supreme Court, in 1996, confirmed the constitutional right of Catholics to public funding of their schools (p. 49). However, as demonstrated in Newfoundland and Quebec, Ontario could change their educational policies, particularly if it was the will of the majority of citizens in Ontario. A concern, though, is that making changes to teaching

religion in Ontario may go further than what parents want. In 1988, for example, the Ontario Court of Appeal responded to a legal action in which parents in Elgin County claimed that a religious-education course being taught by members of a local Bible club in school was illegal (p. 33). The court ruled that "offering religious indoctrination in the general school curricula of public schools . . . was unconstitutional" and "that such a curriculum constitutes religious coercion and violates the rights of religious minorities" (p. 33).

Although many parents were pleased with the court's findings, the Ontario government responded in a way that was not what parents expected or wanted. Memorandum 112 "prohibited religious instruction in schools, even when the course was optional and even where religious coercion wasn't a factor" (Sweet, 1997, p. 34). While the court was protecting minority rights, lawyer Peter Jervis, argues that Memorandum 112 denies minority rights (p. 34). As he explained, "Where does the Constitution require that there be secularism in the publicly funded schools? In fact, if you read the Constitution and see what the Supreme Court has said, it says that freedom of religion means freedom from religious coercion, freedom to practise your religious beliefs, freedom from religious majoritarianism. It doesn't talk about the separation of church and state" (p. 34). In consideration of the Charter of Rights and Freedom, provincial governments need to consider the religious demographics in local school boards. If governments are truly representative of not only the will of the people, but also of preserving and enhancing multiculturalism, and are considerate of minority rights, than these governments should consider a public education system that offers curricula that teaches about various religions, as well as offers opportunities for providing religious

instruction of particular religions based on the needs of that locality. This is important for bringing all children together in one school system, while allowing parents the opportunity to have their children educated with the particular values of their faith without infringing on the rights of others who do not want a particular doctrine taught to their children.

Balancing the rights of each cultural group with their respect for other peoples' rights is the responsibility of both the government and the members of each culture. While government needs to make each cultural group feel welcome and included, cultural groups need to make a commitment to finding common ground with other groups in this pluralistic society. The challenge for a number of parents is finding a way to maintain their culture while integrating into Canadian society. Considering governments' responsibilities regarding education, too little is shared between cultural groups in public schools today. Instead of finding ways to integrate a wide range of religious values, many school boards opt to remove anything remotely linked to religion. This, arguably, would increase intolerance instead of decreasing it. Esther Enkin, managing editor of CBC National Radio News, says, "The public system has so many problems. It says it celebrates diversity, but it seems to deal with it by turning it into nothing" (as cited in Sweet, 1997, p. 111). Elmer Thiessen agrees. In his article, "Teaching for commitment: liberal education, indoctrination, and Christian nurture," Thiessen (1993) effectively sums up the problem in Ontario schools: "There is a horrible paradox in Canada – education and religious education in Ontario used to be contingent upon each other and now it is supposed to be completely separate from each other (p. 10). Public schools need to include more curriculum content on religion. Despite the "religion-free"

approaches of some Ontario schools, the Ontario Ministry of Education (1994) recognizes the value of religion in education:

> Education about religion can help to reduce barriers of ignorance between groups and to increase their mutual understanding and respect. Studying different faiths and getting to know their practitioners are important means of acquiring insight into people of different backgrounds. Greater comprehension of similarities and differences gives students the opportunity to develop values and attitudes that contribute to social harmony, such as appreciation of diversity, respect for those of different backgrounds, and a sense of community. (Relevance in a Pluralistic Society section, Part B, para. 6)

Clearly, the best way to develop empathy and thus tolerance would have to start with knowing much more about other religious traditions.

Legal Issues

The learning about religious traditions needs to begin early if Canadians are to avoid some of the extreme situations that result from ignorance. In the 2009 Angus Reid poll, 62% of Canadians surveyed said they did not want laws and norms to be modified to accommodate minorities (Geddes, 2009, p. 22). Several Canadian laws and norms have been challenged over the years on religious grounds. There was division across Canada when a Sikh man fought for the right to wear his turban instead of the traditional hat of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In 1990, the Canadian Parliament changed the law stating it was the "right, legal, and moral thing to do" and that this law "squares with Canadian human rights legislation and reflects this country's strong commitment to the Multiculturalism Policy" (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1990). Since then, there

have been other challenges to Canadian laws including wearing a kirpan in the Quebec legislature.

Challenging laws and policies that deny rights in regards to minority religions in Canada does not affect adults alone, but extend into the classroom. In April of 2009, a Sikh student in Montreal was in court for threatening two other students with a hair pin, used to keep his hair neat under his turban. The judge's verdict was guilty; at the same time, however, the judge gave this student an unconditional discharge saying that this case would never have come before him had it not had a religious dimension: "If the three boys had the same nationality, and the same faith, this case would not have ended up before the court" (Chung, 2009, p. A-6). Another student went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada in order to defend his right to fulfill his religious obligations while attending public school. Orthodox Sikhs wear kirpans, a ceremonial dagger symbolic of their religious belief in protecting the weak, but not intended for actual use. In 2002, the Montreal school board banned kirpans because it violated their policy that students were not allowed to bring "dangerous and forbidden objects" to school (CBC, 2006). The student went to court to defend his right to wear the kirpan. The Supreme Court ruled 8-0 in favour of allowing the kirpan, saying that the ban violated the Charter of Rights because it infringed on the Charter's guarantees of religious freedom:

> 'Religious tolerance is a very important value of Canadian society,' Justice Louise Charron writes in the unanimous decision. 'A total prohibition against wearing a kirpan to school undermines the value of this religious symbol and sends students the message that some religious practices do not merit the same protection as others.' (CBC, 2006)

This court case sparked a number of debates among Canadian citizens. On-line debates revealed ignorance and negative attitudes of 'assimilate or leave' views, and yet sometimes also sparked excellent discussions in the online forum. And, while it was mainly adults engaged in the online discussion, students are not immune to these attitudes. A significant component of culture is transmitting attitudes, beliefs, values, and a way of life onto other generations. The attitudes expressed in these forums are most likely shared at home or in various forms of media. An important component of classroom learning is the opportunity to discuss and debate current national and international issues. It would be difficult for students to engage in these debates unless they had an understanding of the religious contexts of these challenges.

Another major debate in Canada was over the controversy of wearing hijabs, traditional scarves worn by some Muslim women based on a belief that women are called, according to Muslim teaching, to cover their heads, necks, and sometimes face. Two Montreal high schools expelled Muslim students for wearing hijabs in 1995 (James, 2005, p. 142). A year later, a private school in Montreal expelled a Muslim student wearing a hijab. Quebec's Human Rights Commission investigated these cases and during that time, many stereotypes about Muslims came out. These stereotypes were challenged and provided educational opportunities for not just the Quebec community, but also for the rest of Canada. Kymlicka (1998) claims that this court case actually helped Quebecers learn not to equate Islam with fundamentalism (p. 69). The Commission also supported the student arguing that ". . . banning the veil is discriminatory and would not only compromise a student's right to public instruction, but also her right to freedom of religion, which includes the right to wear distinctive

garments or headgear," (James, 2005, p. 143). On March 9, 2010, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported on the government's decision to disallow the wearing of a niqab, a veil worn by some Muslim women that covers the entire body except for the eyes, by a recent immigrant from Egypt attempting to take a French Language course in CEGEP. The woman, Naima Atef Amed, filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission because she argued that the niqab is worn for religious reasons. Immigration Minister, Yolande James, has responded saying that "Potential Quebec immigrants are asked to sign a contract in which they are asked to make a moral commitment to Quebec's values, including secularism, gender equality and respect for the francophone majority . . . Immigration is a plus for society — but values must be respected, and I remind you that the majority supports these values" (CBC, 2010, March 9). However, the majority of Quebeckers may not be as committed to secularism as James believes. In a survey conducted by Sondage Leger Marketing in May 2009, 76% of Quebeckers polled wanted parents to be able to choose the moral and religious training their children will get at school; whether it would be the new Ethics and Religious Culture course or traditional denominational courses (CNW Group, Ltd). This case illustrates a government decision that may be attempting to address a multicultural vision but disregards the thoughts and values of its local communities.

Educational Implications

Many people believe that education is the means to instilling the values desired by the community and forming children into responsible adults and effective citizens. If there is any prejudice or issues of poverty or sexism or abuse, for example, adults generally will argue that these problems will be reduced with effective education. In New Brunswick high schools, for example, classrooms include lessons on suicide prevention, bullying, contraception, and drugs. As Sweet (1997) points out, "the current public-education system in Canada – a secular system – is, in fact, a value system . . ." (p. 113). Most parents across Canada have similar values they wish to instill in their children and wish for educators to instill: "Kindness to others, fair play, honesty, generosity of spirit, and moral development" (p. 110). The public school system has long recognized the value of teaching about prejudice and racism, from lessons on the civil rights movement to the Holocaust. Peck & Sears (2005) identify the assumption that "increased knowledge about difference will place students on a continuum that moves them from understanding, to tolerance, to respect, and the willingness to accommodate, with the ideal being that students will actually act as advocates for accommodation of difference (p. 111). This is the goal of teachers who facilitate lessons on the slave trade and internment of Japanese-Canadians during World War II. This goal applies to religious education.

Students would highly benefit from having multicultural/multi-faith courses available to them. Any courses that teach about multiple religions would be limited in that it would be nearly impossible to satisfy every person's perspective of what is religion, which religions to study, and which religions to exclude. Gates (2007) identifies

this as a problem in developing a World Religions course, particularly in a country like Britain, in which there are several members of the community involved in the construction of religious education, including parents, educators, government, and religious groups. Of concern to Gates is how to select which religions are studied as well as how to "avoid superficiality, stereotypes, and distortions" (p. 11). It is especially important to consider the cultural context of the community when teaching a course on multiple religions or multiple cultures. As not every religion can be effectively covered in one course, priority should be given to those religions that encompass the Canadian landscape. The advantages of focusing on these religions would be to help students get to know and understand the issues most relevant to their neighbours, particularly those issues that have broader repercussions on the community or the country. The intent of any course on religions would be to promote empathy and understanding of Canadian multiculturalism. These expectations align with the Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies curriculum, which states that students are expected to "determine the principles and actions of just, pluralistic, and democratic societies" as well as to "demonstrate an understanding of their own and others' cultural heritage and cultural identity and the contribution of diverse cultures to society" as essential to good citizenship (Department of Education, 1998, p. 6). As any courses would be limited by time, the course should be reflective of Canadian multicultural identities in regards to religion, and provide opportunities for further study that extend beyond the content of the classroom. It is not necessary to include the study of every religion because an effective course would provide the skill set for the students to apply when they later encounter other religions. For example, students would be able to acquire, process, and interpret

information critically to analyze the influence of any religion on culture, community life, and political policies, and to make informed decisions as voting members of their society.

Education is key to fostering this sense of citizenship. Schools could be effective platforms for educating students about multiculturalism and multiple faiths. Sears & Christou (2011) argue that as religion is an important component of social studies education providing context for historical events, it is also an important component of "our own context, locally and broadly" (in press). They go on to explain: "Where we as educators are charged with developing habits of mind in our students that will enable them to think critically about the world in which they live so that they may act upon hopefully and with a moral sense of responsibility, religion cannot reasonably be marginalized in schools" (in press). Professor James Ron of Carleton University also sees Canada's education system as the means of learning more about religion in Canada and elsewhere. He believes that those involved in Canada's education system ". . . must initiate more comparative faith courses in our public schools and universities" because "Learning more about the tenets of global faith is not a secular concession to dogma. Rather, it is a sign of respect for the billions worldwide who remain religiously motivated, as well as an indicator of intellectual curiosity, political sophistication, and common sense" (Ron, 2010, July 29).

As a fundamental social institution in Canada, it is imperative that schools also participate in "preserving", and "transmitting" the diverse cultural heritage of the students or at least of the greater community in which the school presides (Department of Education, 1998, p. 19). By effectively promoting empathy in schools, students today, and adults in the near future, will more likely integrate into a harmoniously multicultural

society. The Association of American Universities and Colleges (2009) argues that, "If we truly wish for students to engage the tremendous variety of human understandings of life, death, suffering, love, and meaning, there is perhaps no more direct path than through the study of religion (p. 48). Steinbach (2010) believes that some form of religious education would allow students to "overcome egocentricity by becoming aware of their own cultural identity. They must learn to accept differences, understand other socialisation practices, and value other ways of thinking" (as cited in Steinbach, 2010a, p. 538). Peck, Sears, & Donaldson (2008) echo this type of education and emphasize the need to go beyond "a superficial focus on food, fun, and festivals in classrooms at the expense of concentrations on deeper issues of perspective and worldview" (p. 77). Sears and Christou (2011) claim: "To develop the kind of intercultural understanding desired in virtually every democratic state around the world, educators must deal with religion and religious ideas in a substantial way: neither coddling religion nor vilifying it" (in press).

There is debate among scholars and educators about the appropriate and effective approach to teaching about religion in the classroom. In *God in the Classroom,* Lois Sweet (1997) argues: "We need a school system that "acknowledges religious difference and actually educates children about those differences in the classroom" (p. 10). Ed Morgan believes that providing courses on religious diversity is appropriate but not enough. He argues that a world religions course "does little for those families with bona fide commitment to a life of study and adherence to teaching of classical Hebrew, Arabic, or Sanskrit texts . . . Taking multiculturalism seriously means fostering an environment that also accounts for the needs of those whose cultural, intellectual, and religious life requires a form of education impossible to achieve in public schools (as cited in Egbo,

2009, p. 83). Morgan is addressing the occurrences of Canadian cities with huge populations of cultural groups who strictly adhere to religious beliefs. If Canada is committed to multiculturalism, than it must allow Canadians to practice their beliefs, customs, and practices as freely as possible. Part of this is allowing Canadians to participate in an educational community that reflects these beliefs, customs, and practices. A community with large numbers of families like Morgan describes requires a provincial government to provide enough support for multicultural education within public and if appropriate, private schools. It is necessary, considering Canadian laws and policies, to change current practices in many provinces so that they all consistently provide adequate support to meet the needs of students with diverse religious backgrounds.

The implication for education will include renewed efforts to improve educational policies, curricula, teacher-training, and educational resources to reduce potential discrimination of various cultural groups, and to increase feelings of empathy among students as citizens of their multicultural society. This focus in education is already apparent in the New Brunswick provincial government. For the first time in government history, provincial funding placed education as its top priority in 2009, providing it with a bigger budget than the economy and health, in order to focus on "Twenty-First Century Education." The New Brunswick Department of Education published a report on "Twenty-First Century Education" that lists the most essential skills required of all twenty-first century learners. According to former Deputy Minister John Kershaw (2010, April 7, personal communication, New Brunswick Teachers' Association Board of Directors Meeting), this list includes "cross-cultural skills;" students, he says, must have

the "ability to interact with heterogeneous groups" because these students belong to "culturally diverse groups." He particularly mentioned that although New Brunswick is not as diverse as Toronto, New Brunswick students must be able to think and act in collaboration with other Canadians reflective of Canadian culture.

Much more work is required, however, as research conducted to date has found that students "lacked sophisticated understandings of ethnic diversity, with some not recognizing expressions of ethnic identity at all (Peck, Thompson, Chareka, Joshee, & Sears, 2010, p. 70). While it is important to consider all aspects of culture, students seem to be especially lacking in their understanding about different religions. In 2008, Peck, Sears, and Donaldson published findings on a study conducted about grade seven students and their understanding of diversity in New Brunswick. The research reflected five categories of the students' understanding of ethnic diversity, including a religious component at every level. At the bottom were students who had no understanding of ethnic diversity, while category three reflected "vague recognition" of religion but without the understanding of the actual religion (Peck, Sears, & Donaldson, p. 72). At the top was the understanding of "religious and cultural identities as legitimate shapers of behaviour and ideas" (p. 71). The results of their study were more than disappointing. Most of the students were not able to identify religious connections of the images shown to them, and were unable to articulate their understanding of the religious significance of various stimuli. They noted, however, that through religious education there is the "potential to greatly enhance understanding of diversity" based on their research conducted with students in England, a country that has a fully developed religious education curriculum from elementary to high school (p. 87).

Peck, et al. (2008) found that the students were ignorant of almost every aspect of diversity; the students did not recognize the place of diversity in Canada but instead saw it as a "foreign" issue, and many students were very unaccommodating to diversity (p. 75). Part of reason for these results is that religious education is absent in most public schools, and where religion and culture are dealt with, it is done superficially to "avoid some of the potential conflicts that terrify policy makers and practitioners, but it does not do justice to the topic and leaves students ignorant and confused" (Arthur, Gearon, & Sears, 2010, para. 22). Peck, et al. are also critical of the standards set by the Atlantic curriculum. They argue that some of the expectations are too "broad and complex to be used to prescribe resources, teaching and assessment" (p. 83). Finally, another reason for these results is the lack of teacher training and resources. Few teachers have the background to teach the subject, and they have few resources to provide the training. Education programs are lacking in religious education.

Parents and Education

While there are many Christian Canadians who grapple with multi-faith education, there are also many concerns raised by non-Christian parents about education. Student enrolment in independent schools has been rising in Canada – 2.5% in 1970, 4.8% in 1992 (Sweet, 1997, p. 117). Part of the reason this is happening is because of the dissatisfaction of parents who have strong ties to religious traditions who either want that tradition passed on to their children or who feel it is their duty to do so. Due to the history of the mistreatment of Jewish people, Sweet spoke with many Jewish parents who feel it is essential to the survival of their culture for their children to attend separate schools. The Environics survey compiled in 2007 indicate that the majority of Muslim

families feel they can effectively integrate into Canadian life by "adopting Canadian customs" while preserving their religious and cultural practices (Adams, slides 31-32). In order to maintain their religious identity, many parents believe their children need to go to an Islam-focused school (Sweet, 1997, p. 133). For some parents, public school undermines the values they wish to instill in their children. Sweet (1997), in researching her book, *God in the Classroom*, said,

> I often got the feeling from religious-school advocates that fear was the major reason they'd rejected public education. Fear that public school children, the teachers who teach them, and the curricula of studies would pollute their children. Fear that public schools subversively encourage children to question and challenge their faith, their traditions. Fear that public schools discourage children from expressing authentic identities, especially authentic religious identities. Fear that forces of secularism, individualism, and materialism within public schools are simply too strong to resist. Fear that their children will end up rejecting the values, the faith, and the life that they themselves believe in. (p. 235)

Although some parents may enroll their children in private schools out of fear, many others feel it is about providing the best stepping blocks to good citizenship. Many parents argue that their children become effective citizens of their communities and of the country when they are rooted in their own religious traditions. Sweet (1997) described this philosophy: "When you know who you are, you can confront the larger society from a position of strength" (p. 243). The question is whether or not private school is necessary in order to have this position of strength, or if it is possible to gain identity and empowerment through a common school. Sweet argues that the way to bring students

back from private institutions to public schools is to include religious education into schools; she believes that "Public education is eroding because it isn't responding fully to the needs of a new Canada" (p. 240). It is possible to better meet the needs of Canada's demographic, as demonstrated in Alberta. Edmonton schools allow various culturally-focused classes at local levels (p. 243). This allows parents to place their children in public schools and take courses that teach them about their own religion. The intent of these courses is not to persuade students to identify with a particular religion, or to be indoctrinated, but instead to become informed so that students better understand the values of members of their community in relation to the values of other Canadians.

Current Education in New Brunswick and Religion

The New Brunswick Department of Education has many goals for students graduating from high school. Listed as "essential graduation learnings," the government expects all students to graduate with skills in technological competence, problem solving, personal development, communication, citizenship, and aesthetic expression (Department of Education, 1998, p. 5). Arguably, citizenship is a top priority among the learnings, because without skills in citizenship, students could become a social, economic, and political burden on their community. As part of citizenship, students need to "assess social, cultural, economic, and environmental interdependence in a local and global context" (p. 6). Students are not likely able to make these assessments without an awareness of the cultural landscape of New Brunswick, Canada, and the rest of the world. Students entering their final years of high school are increasingly aware of the cultural landscape of their world. More encounters with news stories and current events dealing with cultural issues, students need to be knowledgeable about different cultures in order

to effectively critically examine these issues. As high school students preparing to become more active citizens of their community, their province, and their country, the school system is the ideal place to better inform students about cultural issues.

Recent legal issues in Canada affirm the need to inform students about religion. Especially in consideration of the previously cited court cases in Quebec, in regards to the wearing of a niqab or a kirpan, students need to understand the context in order to effectively participate in the democratic process. By learning about religion, and learning from religion, students become informed. This awareness often creates curiosity about what others believe, and the customs and practices which form part of others' religious observances. In an increasingly global society, students will encounter people of various religious backgrounds, and will hopefully live harmoniously in community with them. The Dalai Lama suggests that it is through awareness of religious identities, that people become better members of society:

> Humanitarianism and true love for all beings can only stem from an awareness of the content of religion. By whatever name religion may be known, its understanding and practice are the essence of a peaceful mind and therefore of a peaceful world. If there is no peace in one's mind, there can be no peace in one's approach to others, and thus no peaceful relations between individuals or between nations. (as cited in Fisher, 1999, 163)

Regardless of whether or not a Canadian identifies with a particular religion, all Canadians are expected to participate in the democratic practice. This means that graduates participating in community life will be making decisions that impact the religiosity of other citizens.

New Brunswick currently has no specific curriculum in place to learn about and analyze major world religions and their influences on Canadian life. Instead, it relies on general social studies and History classes to meet the aims of the *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum* (1998) which include demonstrating "understanding of their own and others' cultural heritage and cultural identity and the contribution of diverse cultures to society" (p. 6). Peck, et al. (2008) are critical of the standards set by the Atlantic curriculum. They argue, for example, that the expectation that "students will be able to describe how culture is preserved, modified, and transmitted: is too "broad and complex to be used to prescribe resources, teaching, and assessment" (p. 83). They further question how it would be possible to meet these expectations when the teachers themselves have little background to teach the subject, and without the resources to do it well (p. 83).

The courses available for students in high school are not effectively providing the knowledge and skills to students. Until 2006, students in grade nine Social Studies classes learned about cultures around the world with *Global Insights*, but this was switched to a *Canadian Identity* program leaving little opportunity to have an in depth study of culture and religion. In high school, other than historical connections to the Crusades, the Renaissance, and Reformation in grade ten; and the French Revolution in grade eleven; there is very little discussion about religion. In these courses, the focus is often on corruption and violence. As well, these courses are rooted in history, and unless teachers extend their lessons, there is no connection made to current religious issues in Canada. It is highly unlikely that current religious issues are explored considering the large amount of outcomes expected in each curriculum.

Only a few grade twelve elective courses offer insight on major world religions, and out of those few, like World Issues and Sociology, only Sociology explores religions other than Christianity and Islam. These courses also discuss current issues and trends, and so students often do not receive the origins or history of each of the major world religions, in order to establish a context on which to discuss current issues with more depth and understanding. Considering that New Brunswick is an increasingly pluralistic society, this limited education about religion is negligent. In 1948, Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, in the trial of McCollum versus the Board of Education, stated: "The fact is that, for good or ill, nearly everything in our culture worth transmitting, everything which gives meaning to life, is saturated with religious influences . . . One can hardly respect a system of education that would leave the student wholly ignorant of the currents of religious thought that move the world society" (as cited in Sewall, 1998, p. 1). The New Brunswick education system requires a review of its curriculum to determine how to best incorporate multi-faith education in school. Arguably, it applies to Social Studies classes throughout the twelve years of study. However, as an in-depth study, multi-faith education is especially important in the high school years as students are maturing and preparing to become more active citizens. In order to consider the best approach to multi-faith education in New Brunswick, it is ideal to consider approaches to education about religion and by religion in other parts of Canada and in other parts of the world.

Religion in Canada's Public Schools

Benedicta Egbo (2009) argues that access to education:

> . . . is often associated with two sets of life chances: increased life options, which means a greater range of future choices as a result of the acquired knowledge, and increased ligatures, which means individuals develop a greater range of connection with one another as a result of their shared experience in education. Both types of life chances are critical to the empowerment of any group, particularly those that have historically been at the margins of their societies. (p. 8)

The second part of Egbo's statement is particularly significant for those parents choosing separate education for their children. The shared experiences of students would most likely be much more one-sided if engagements take place in a school environment that promotes only one religion and one culture. Many of these private schools support indoctrination instead of critically examining issues within their religious systems. However, these independent schools would certainly empower a group of students who might otherwise feel marginalized. A goal of educational systems across Canada is to attempt to empower those who feel marginalized within the public school system. The vision of the Ontario Ministry of Education (2011), for example, is to ensure that "all students will have a sense of belonging in a safe and caring environment." The Governments of Alberta and New Brunswick also express a desire to meet the unique needs of each student. These departments of education must not only consider changing or adding curriculum, but must also carefully examine the hidden curriculum in Canadian schools. As Egbo identified: ". . . the school calendar, social and religious celebrations, concerts and festivals, hallway displays, the collections in school libraries, Eurocentric values . . . schools perpetuate inequalities, discrimination, and prejudice" (p. 9). A closer

inspection of the education systems of Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the Northwest Territories, provide an overview of progress or lack of progress made in providing education on multiple religions. These provinces and territory retain their right to denominational schools, and as such, have educational departments specializing in religious education. Consequently, they are ideal sources of insight into the implementation of multi-faith education.

Since the 1969 Keiller McKay report on "Religious Education and Moral Development," Ontario has implemented measures to promote empowerment in public education. In 1994, the Ontario Ministry of Education came out with "Education About Religion in Ontario Public Elementary Schools" in order to help

> boards of education in developing programs in education about religion for public elementary school students. . . Individual boards or groups of boards that choose to work together will find the document helpful in designing programs about religion that will be consistent with government policy, appropriate to the needs of their local communities, and relevant within the context of both Ontario society and the global community. (Preface section, para. 1)

The population of Ontario today includes significant numbers of people from diverse racial, ethnocultural, and religious backgrounds, and the government recognized the need to foster respect for an understanding of different cultures, including "their forms of religious expression" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1994, Introduction section, para. 1). The Ministry was very specific about the role of religion in Ontario public schools. Classes in these public schools were to study religion in an academic context, not a devotional one; expose students to all religious views without imposing any

particular view; teach but not indoctrinate any student; and to raise awareness about all religions, but not to encourage or force students to convert to any one of the religions (Recent Legal Documents section, para. 3). Sweet (1997) takes these guidelines further by specifically promoting meaningful teaching of religion. In her words, "Religious literacy . . . will have to challenge students to grapple with the meaning and implications of different religious beliefs, while developing their own perspectives" (p. 245).

Although some parents favour private education, religiously-affiliated groups are starting to promote public education. The Buddhist Communities of Greater Toronto believes the best chance for teaching tolerance and valuing diverse cultures is to encourage "multi-faith religious education in all schools" (Sweet, 1997, p. 108). As their representative explained, "We'd rather work to build shared understandings between people," (p. 108). More educational resources are available to help teach multi-faith religious education. Ontario offers a World Religions course in public schools and separate Catholic schools in grade 11. World Religions is an essential component of Ontario's high school Social Studies and Humanities courses, as it is recognized as contributing to students' understanding of "human society, thought, and culture" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 3). There are two levels offered: an open course as well as a rigorous academic option. These courses are recognized by Canadian universities for credit purposes. As well, Ontario introduces topics about various religions at an early age. As early as grade two, students are talking about religious holidays, traditions, and celebrations, in order to meet the expectation that all students will understand that "Canada is a country of many cultures" (p. 23). Of all the provinces, Ontario seems to be most applying the initiatives in its multiculturalism policy to education, particularly in

familiarizing students with multiple cultures and religions throughout their entire years of education. Considering that Ontario is the most culturally diverse province in Canada, it is to this province that many other provinces can gain academic literature, resources, and curriculum guides in order to promote religious literacy.

Saskatchewan offers four choices for parents in regards to education. There are a public school system and separate school system covered under the provincial budget; these schools are primarily Roman Catholic, but there are also Protestant Separate School Boards. Parents also can choose an independent school system, which requires them to pay tuition for their child(ren), such as the Islamic Saskatoon Misbah school. Finally, parents have the option to homeschool. In examining the curriculum guidelines as set out by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, there are no comparative world religions courses; however, as part of their graduation expectations, students in high school are required to take two Arts Education/Practical and Applied Arts courses, in which a Christian Ethics course is offered (Ministry of Education, 2009, pp. 15-16). This course is rooted in Christian ideology but includes one unit on comparative world religions. Saskatchewan also allows for teachers to submit proposals for local option courses. An optional course on World Religions has been included in some school boards.

Interestingly, while separate Catholic and Protestant schools have been maintained in Saskatchewan, the religious landscape in this province has changed considerably over the last twenty years. Between 1991 and 2001, Statistics Canada noted a rising number of citizens claiming a non-religious affiliate, while the Roman Catholic and many of the Protestant numbers have dropped (2006 Census). Also, several other religious affiliations have emerged, including Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism, which was

first added to the Census in 1981, as well as Judaism, and Buddhism, which have long had representation in this province due to the Canadian Immigration policy in the early 1900s that brought many Eastern European settlers to the west. Considering that First Nations, like in many other provinces, have had a considerable impact on the development of the province of Saskatchewan, and that their spirituality is, for many, an essential component of their cultural identity, it is surprising that the Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan has not been more inclusive of education of multiple religions. Of the three provinces that still retain their denominational rights in education, Saskatchewan has done the least to strengthen its multicultural policy through education.

In 1975, Alberta introduced a course in high schools on comparative world religions. In 1985, Alberta changed its social studies curriculum, adding more courses to a religious studies department. As of 2008, Alberta offered three different courses in high school on religious studies: Religious Ethics, Religious Meanings, and World Religions. According to the province's review of its social studies curriculum in 2008, "The objectives of the courses in religious studies are to provide an opportunity to experience a number of cultural, historical and contemporary issues from a religious point of view, and, through the study of religion as a separate discipline, to "develop a philosophy based upon values conducive to ethical and moral behaviour and reflected in an understanding of human worth" (as cited in Staszenski, 2008, p. 6). These courses are offered as options in the regular public school system; none are required for graduation. The Alberta Department of Education also allows for local option courses in religious studies. These courses follow a guideline that Alberta applies to all religious courses: "An essential criterion for approval of locally developed Religious Studies courses is that

at least twenty percent of each course addresses issues that extend beyond the specific religious tradition reflected in the program" (Alberta Education, 2010, p. 9). This means that a course in religious studies may have up to 80% of its content about Christianity, or in the case of the Alberta Catholic school system, Roman Catholicism. Surprisingly, Alberta also offers little opportunity in elementary and middle level grades to learn about various religions. The general themes of elementary social studies programs are democracy and citizenship; however, in its expectations, the focus is on linguistic culture and historical roots, rather than on religious diversity and its impact on culture. Alberta's religious landscape is diverse, according to the 2001 Census conducted for Statistics Canada (2006, May 2). In Alberta, there are almost 50,000 Muslims, almost 11,000 people identifying their religious belief in Judaism, over 33,000 Buddhists, over 23,000 Sikhs, and almost two million Christians. Of all the provinces, Alberta is the fourth most religiously diverse society (following Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia). Alberta would benefit by expanding its curriculum to be more inclusive of religious pluralism in its elementary schools, and to apply religious literacy to its core high school social studies courses.

The Northwest Territories has a small population of less than 40,000 inhabitants. Almost 50% of its population is Roman Catholic, while a third of its population is Protestant. A large percentage of the population of Northwest Territories is Aboriginal, with many of them affiliated with the Roman Catholic religion, while others adhere to traditional Aboriginal Spirituality. Although representing only 1% of its total population, the Northwest Territories is also home to Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, and Hindus (Statistics Canada, 2006). In 1875, the Northwest Territories Act gave this territory the same rights

to religious education as in Ontario. The Northwest Territories have held on to these rights, and currently, there is one Catholic School Board, responsible for two primary schools and one secondary school. While the Junior Secondary Social Studies Curriculum (1993) document claims that schooling in the Northwest Territories is expected to "promote the balanced growth of students, so that there is healthy development in each of the physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and social domains" and "to provide student-centered learning that recognizes the varying needs of learners and responds to student diversity," there is no course or content within the courses that allow for lessons that focus on spirituality or religious diversity in grades 7 to 9 (p. 3). The high school social studies curriculum follows the vision and guidelines of the Alberta curriculum. In the Catholic high school, Religion 15 is offered to grade 10 students, a World Religions course similar to the course taught in Ontario. In grade 11, students continue religious education with Religion 25, a course considered in the curriculum handbook as a continuation of the grade 10 course, focusing on social justice issues in light of students' understanding of religious pluralism. Finally, grade 12 students in the Catholic school take Religion 35 to prepare them for a "Christian lifestyle" (Yellowknife Catholic Schools, 2011). In comparison, the public high schools offer Religion 15 and Religion 25 as optional courses for students. Like Alberta, the Northwest Territories needs to ensure all students, not just students in Catholic schools, are required to learn more about major world religions, and religious education needs to begin in primary schools.

International Perspectives on Multi-Faith Education

Recently, Nicholas Sarkozy announced that multiculturalism is a failure (National Post, 2011). He argued that "our Muslim compatriots must be able to practise their

religion, as any citizen can, [but] we in France do not want people to pray in an ostentatious way in the street" (as cited in the National Post, 2011). Other national leaders like German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister David Cameron have also condemned multicultural policies as failing to integrate immigrants into their nation's identity. All three leaders singled out Muslims as a religious group that did not seem to conform to national "standards" and who may be responsible for "home-grown terrorism" (National Post, 2011). In consideration of France's education system and laws, it is not surprising to hear that multiculturalism is not working in France. France has a complete separation of state and religion. No public institutions are allowed to display religious symbols. No public schools are allowed to meaningfully teach about religion except within the confines of historical significance. France officially supports the principle of "laïcité" which means that the country is neutral about religion, and therefore, there are no religious signs or symbols in public institutions, including schools (Küçükhan, 2005, p. 4).

Most recently, France sparked debate across Europe in its government's quest to ban full head scarves in the public sphere. While the French parliament debated, Belgium voted to ban niqabs and other full head coverings, and France followed suit in May 2010. France argued that this was an equality issue, rather than a religious issue, which allowed the ban to pass without the public's full consideration of the human right of religious freedom. However, as the nearly two thousand head scarves in France are worn by Muslim women, who strongly oppose the suggestion that they are suppressed by wearing a scarf rather than their belief in that they are making a personal decision, not influenced by men, to wear the scarves to show their modesty and humility before Allah,

this ban seems to be very much a religious issue. In such an atmosphere, how do multiple cultures coexist peacefully? How is it possible for Muslims, for example, to feel legitimized? As Sweet (1997) argues, "If people aren't legitimized by the society in which they live, if it doesn't accept them for who they are, then they suffer and could fail to attain their full human potential" (p. 14).

Germany is not opposed to religion in the public realm like France. In fact, Germany's historical religious identity has been Lutheranism, and this Christian tradition is still a part of the public education system. Küçükhan (2005) claims that Germany's religious education in public schools is much more about indoctrination than it is about religious literacy (p. 1). The German constitution "guarantees religious education as a regular subject in public schools, this being put into practice by the churches in the frame of subsidiarity" (p. 1). Teachers in the public schools are employed by the government. However, they also need the permission of the Church, Catholic or Protestant, to teach religion (Ziebertz, van der Tuin, 2008, p. 57). The fact that the Christian churches are partners in providing religious education while other religious communities, particularly Islamic groups, do not have access to education in the regular school system, makes it very likely that the education students receive does not enhance a religiously-diverse and accepting perspective.

Muslim communities in Germany have, instead, opened their own confessional private schools. This relates to the country's view of multiculturalism. Chancellor Merkel publicly expressed the failure of the country's "multi-kulti" policy. Germany does not have an official policy, but practiced tolerance for cultural diversity after the fall of the Nazi regime. For a couple decades, several immigrants settled in Germany, and

the government philosophy was one of having multiple cultures "living side by side happily" (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2010, October 17). However, in the last several years, news reports suggest a growing intolerance toward other cultures in Germany. A survey conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation found that "more than 30% of people believed the country was "overrun by foreigners." As there is no evidence of effective education on cultural and religious plurality, it is questionable how the German government expects any multicultural policy to work.

A third country's leader to criticize national multiculturalism policies is Britain's Prime Minister, David Cameron. The Prime Minister, at the Munich Security Conference in February 2011, argued that "under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream" (News Limited, 2011, February 5). In response, Cameron argues for a "more active, muscular liberalism where equal rights, the rule of law, freedom of speech and democracy are actively promoted to create a stronger national identity." These rights and freedoms have long been a part of the Citizenship curriculum in Britain, and it is worth examining the cultural aspects of curriculum to determine if the lack of multiculturalism in Britain is due to a lack of understanding of equal rights, or in a lack of effective education about multiple cultures and faiths.

Religious education has been a part of Britain's school curriculum for centuries. In Britain, it is The Education Reform Act of 1988 that officially established religious education in public schools (Küçükcan, 2005). In Britain today, there are "moderate pluralist approaches to religious education" to fit the general image of Britain as a "tolerant" country (Davis, 2010, p. 190). Gates (2007) believes that it has a claim to

being "the most authentic version of [religious education] for publicly funded schools" (p. 11). In fact, he suggests that Britain's model should be used around the world (Gates, 2007, p. 71). He appreciates that religious education is fully funded by taxes, that all major world religions are introduced throughout the twelve years of schooling, that many teachers are well-trained, and that the curriculum is open to scrutiny by representatives of the parents of the different faith communities in each of the local schools (p. 70). The curriculum is not a national standard but is, instead, developed locally making connections to the communities in which they live, in particular, being considerate of religious pluralism in different communities in Britain. Local "Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education" advise public schools about religious education (Küçükcan, 2005). Despite the local religious demographics, the curriculum is required "to reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain" (Küçükcan, 2005). Besides Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism are included in the religious education curriculum.

Due to Britain's long tradition of religious education and to its continuing pursuit of excellence in teaching, there are a variety of academic resources and curricula to help teachers become informed about multiple religions, and to incorporate an effective religious literacy component to their classes. Part of the hesitancy about other religions, particularly Islam, is the 2005 London transport system terrorist attack. While Cameron, in his speech in Munich, made a clear distinction between Islam and extremism, the larger British public still holds biased views about Islam. This is reflected in Cameron's address as it was primarily about Islamic extremism.

Considering that the Head of the State in Britain is also the Head of the Anglican Church, it is not surprising that Christianity is considered the historical and cultural roots of Britain's identity. However, after revisions to its national curriculum in 2008, more content is based on diversity (Arthur, Gearon, & Sears, 2010, Chapter 6, para. 18). One of the expectations in this revised curriculum was that students were to consider "how democracy, justice, diversity, toleration, respect, and freedom are valued by people with different beliefs, backgrounds, and traditions within a changing democratic society" (Chapter 6, para. 18). This revision to the national curriculum was influenced by the London subway bombings of 2005. Increased fear of Muslim extremism due to these bombings created an urgent need for English citizens to have a better understanding of different religions, in order to combat the generalizations and stereotypes that were heightened after this terrorist attack. While these revisions were being implemented in British schools, Ofsted, or The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, examined the strengths and weaknesses of religious education in British primary and secondary schools from 2006 to 2009. They found that schools seriously attempted to effectively meet the expectations of the religious education curriculum but there were several cases where "teachers lacked the knowledge and confidence to plan and teach high quality [religious education] lessons" (Ofsted, 2010, p. 4). The focus on local development and implementation led to uncertainty among teachers about what they were trying to achieve through religious education. Ofsted found that many of the approaches lacked in structure, sequence, the use of critical thinking skills, and quality assessment (p. 6). Ofsted recommended better professional development, which it recognized as the weakest aspect of religious education in Britain (p. 39).

Part of the goal of religious education in Britain is to contribute "to pupils' personal development and well-being and to community cohesion by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in a diverse society" (as cited in Davis, 2010, p. 200). Ofsted (2010) found that the goal for community cohesion was successfully achieved in many of its schools (p. 5). Specifically, Ofsted inspectors found that in many schools, religious education "plays a major role in helping pupils understand diversity and develop respect for the beliefs and cultures of others" (p. 5). This report also noted that religious education was most effective when the teachers "used a range of enquiry skills such as investigation, interpretation, analysis, evaluation and reflection" (p. 6). Their concern, however, was that because religious education is developed and implemented locally, that these practices were not "embedded sufficiently into classroom practice" nationally (p. 6). Overall, their findings reported that the quality of the curriculum was "good" in 40% of the schools while only one school out of the 89 secondary schools they visited was "outstanding" (p. 28). While the 2010 report identified areas of concern, it also identified many of the strengths of religious education, and provided suggestions on how to improve religious education (pp. 45-47). Britain is far ahead of its neighbours in France and Germany in the opportunity to change the attitudes of citizens toward difference.

While the curriculum is ideal for promoting the values sought for by Cameron, Britain's government needs to make a stronger attempt to address attitudes towards Muslims (this also applies to France). Ofsted (2010) believes that religious education has been particularly successful in improving students' attitudes toward religion and religious education (p. 4). As they reported, "In most of the schools visited, pupils clearly understood the importance of learning about the diversity of religion and belief in

contemporary society. Where pupils expressed more negative attitudes towards diversity, the [religious education] provision was often inadequate and included few opportunities for them to develop an understanding of the beliefs and ways of life of others (p. 4). All three countries, France, Germany, and Britain, need to evaluate how effectively they are developing and implementing programs to ensure multiculturalism can succeed. Britain has the potential to meet the goals of its multiculturalism policy if it would implement the recommendations of the 2010 Ofsted report. France and Germany, on the other hand, have much more work to do in order to reach the potential that Britain can achieve.

Fancourt (2010), a teacher of Religious Education in Britain explains that his curriculum is both "learning about religion" and "learning from religion" (p. 292). His approach to religious education is illustrative of the recommended approach by Ofsted (2010). Fancourt defines this as having students evaluate the beliefs and values students have studied, and having students reflect on their own beliefs as they learn about multiple religions (p. 292). Based on research conducted, Fancourt determined that students achieved the following outcomes from his Religious education course:

1) "They viewed knowledge and understanding as obvious learning outcomes in religious education. Furthermore, they could make judgements about their own progress in them." (p. 296)

2) They "recognised constructive criticism as a learning outcome in religious education; they were better at critiquing. Further, they could also self-assess their progress in it." (p. 297)

3) They valued "expressing their own beliefs", for example, they were able to consider the relevance of their own point-of-view, and "to evaluate its place in the lives of others." (p. 298)

4) They saw themselves as "less intolerant" or more respectful of others with religious beliefs different than their own (p. 299). Although they still disagreed

> with others' beliefs, they felt that they at least understood why others held the beliefs they did. (p. 299).

While the curriculum promotes multi-faith education, more work needs to be done in Britain to move away from a Christian-dominated, confessional approach to education, to a more "intellectually rigorous" religious education (Earl, 2010, p. 281). Earl (2010) argues that students need to "acquire the skill of evidencing and propositional thinking, and to have real interaction with local, national, and international faith communities" (Earl, 2010, p. 276). Ozanne (2010) supports this argument of a more intellectually rigorous education: "Religious education in community schools should 'help young people to develop and articulate their own informed views and opinions on religion [and encourage] both reflection and critical analysis" (as cited in Ozanne, p. 342). He further argues that religious education must talk about "the hatreds bred by religions through a 'structured empathy about other views, leading to multicultural challenge" (Ozanne, p. 342).

Considering religious education in other countries is challenging in that Canada's cultural landscape is far different from many other countries. Unlike France, Germany, and Britain, Canada's country is rooted in immigration, and Canada has continually, from Confederation to current times, sought immigrants. Canadian immigrants have a far easier entrance than immigrants in other countries because of the amount of immigrants entering with them, as well as the strong desire by most Canadians to keep multiculturalism as a defining characteristic of its country. In considering countries more complementary to Canada's cultural landscape, Sweden stands out. Like Canada, Sweden officially recognized itself as a multicultural country in 1975. Sweden is

religiously diverse containing 400,000 Muslims, 170,000 Catholics, 100,000 Orthodox Christians, 20,000 Jews, and 25,000 Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Baha'i followers (as cited in von Bromssen & Olgac, 2010, p. 127). Sweden, like Canada, traditionally taught Christian education in school. However, in 1975, the Swedish government, in order to protect multiculturalism in its country, created a policy "upholding principles of equality between Swedish citizens and immigrants, freedom of choice for immigrants and members of the minority groups, and partnership between immigrants and Swedish citizens (p. 121). To apply this policy, there is a national, multicultural curriculum in Sweden, which state outcomes for students to ". . . have knowledge about the national minorities' cultures, languages, religions, and history" (p. 126-7). The curriculum is compulsory and is non-confessional, instead applying a "non-denominational, comparative religious study approach, combined with reflections on human life" (p. 128). Through this curriculum, the goal is to provide students with: "knowledge and understanding of different religions, traditions, and philosophical strains of thought" while also inspiring empathy and self-awareness (personal development)" (p. 128). While the goals and outcomes are consistent with approaches in other parts of the world, von Bromssen & Olgac (2010) argue that government policies in Sweden "have had little impact on school content and teacher education" (p. 127). Learning from this research, it is important to ensure that any multi-faith instruction must be facilitated by teachers who have the knowledge and understanding themselves.

The United States has a comparable cultural landscape to Canada, and has a history of immigration similar to Canada. Unlike, Canada, however, America has historically promoted assimilation into an "American" ideology. Playwright Israel

Zangwill fashioned the term "melting pot" to describe the loss of habits, traditions and customs of the immigrants' countries of origin in order to develop a "uniquely American culture" (Owen, 2005, p. 1). Over the years, the concept of "melting pot" has shifted to "mosaic" in order to "to foster understanding of cultural diversity by exposing students to the customs and traditions of racial and ethnic groups" (p. 3). Currently, the curriculum promotes multicultural lessons based on issues of race and ethnicity; however, the curriculum does not foster understanding of major world religions. Legally, there is a separation between religion and state. The constitution and Supreme Court in America indicate that "inclusion of religion as a subject in the public school curriculum does not offend constitutional principles" (Lin, Jarvie, Purcell, Larke, & Perkins, p. 149). However, the First Amendment also suggests that institutions of the state need to have an impartial view of religion. In the American public school system, most teachers limit discussions of religion to historical issues like the Holocaust. Parents wanting religious education send their children to private schools instead. These schools often have a vision of fostering a particular religion, instead of offering courses that would teach students about multiple religions. Owen (2005) believes that the traditional sense of "American culture" is changing due to the younger generations in the United States who believe that there should be a much more flexible interpretation of the "American way" that is tolerant and accepting of individualism (p. 13). This changing mentality has the potential to create opportunity for developing religious education in the United States.

Teaching a World Religions Course in New Brunswick High Schools

British educator John Hull provides an ideal approach to teaching religion:

> We distinguish between learning religion, learning about religion, and learning from religion. Learning religion is learning to be religious and should be done in the home, church, synagogue, mosque, or temple. It doesn't have a place in schools. Learning about religion is the repetitive study of religions, a factual study. But learning from religion is encountering religious stories in such a way as to make a contribution to the spiritual, moral, cultural, and general educational way of students. (as cited in Sweet, 1997, p. 225)

Students need a religious education that teaches students to use critical thinking skills to make important ethical judgments, particularly as adults in a pluralistic country. Gates (2007) uses the term "religiate" when speaking about religious education. This is a highly effective way to describe the ideal objective of religious education. Gates defines "religiate" as "a student's understanding of what it means to be religious" (p. 39). Comparatively, "religiate" is as significant as "literate" and "numerate." As an Ecumenical Study Commission on Public Education surmised, "The public schools should build bridges of understanding between the faith traditions, not impediments to communication" (Rationale for Multifaith Religious Education section, n.d.). This understanding will help to reduce the ignorance that usually appears during controversial issues arising in public life, like the trials on wearing kirpans or hijabs.

Upon graduation, New Brunswick high school students are expected to have achieved a number of "essential graduation learnings", including citizenship, communication, personal development, and problem solving (Department of Education, 1998, p. 5). As a high school Social Studies teacher in New Brunswick, I have taught several courses including Ancient and Medieval History, Modern History, Political

Science, World Issues, and Media Studies. Having previously taught in Ontario, I was familiar with the World Religions course taught in public schools, and recognized its value for students in helping them better understand the values and beliefs of their classmates, and also better understand current controversial issues in the news and in government. At the time, Parliament was debating the legal definition of marriage and the Parliament eventually passed a bill that changed the definition. Many students did not understand the controversy this debate stirred until they became aware of the religious teachings of various major world religions. This was not the first news story that required contextual understanding of the issue, and since then, many other issues have been debated in Canada, including, most recently, the wearing of kirpans in public buildings. However, discussion of these topics is difficult to fit into current curriculum outcomes in New Brunswick courses. The rigorous pace of a semester school system does not allow for much extension of listed outcomes. As a result, it is challenging to provide students with the context they need to better understand religious issues in Canada today. Social Studies curriculum provides limited opportunity to talk about different cultures represented in Canada, but most of this opportunity is available in optional grade twelve courses.

In creating a World Religions 120 course, the goal is to ensure that by the end of the course, students have gained knowledge about the major religions represented in Canada; a deeper understanding of how these major religions influence culture, community life, and the political decisions made in this country; and the critical skills needed to debate, analyze, and assess religious issues that affect Canadian laws and policies. This goal is consistent with the recommendations of Sweet (1997), Gates

(2007), Noddings (2008), and many other proponents of religious education. The course is divided into units that first introduce the major world religions, and then move to analyzing issues related to these religions. Unit 1 is entitled, "Religion in a personal and local context" and provides students with the opportunity to consider their own beliefs, their understanding of what is religion as well as the essential characteristics of religion, and finally to learn about Canadian laws about religion in public life and in education. Unit 2 is entitled, "Revealing the Sacred" and allows students the opportunity to learn about various religions' perceptions of God, other supernatural figures or forces, as well as how people have come to believe. Unit 3 is entitled, "Origins and Beliefs of Major World Religions" and Unit 4 is entitled, "Practices and Rituals of Major World Religions". The purpose of these two units is to inform the students by providing them with the knowledge they will need to address current issues in Canadian society. Finally, Unit 5 is entitled, "Issues and Ethics in a Global Context." This is an essential part of the curriculum as it is in this unit that students will apply what they have learned into examining current laws and policies about religion. Students will also re-examine their understanding of what is religion, and consider other understandings of spirituality as well as atheism (as recommended by Noddings, 2008, p. 370). They will analyze legal issues, and make informed decisions demonstrating the skills they will need to be effective citizens of Canada. Ensuring that students have the opportunity to work on their research skills, students will work cumulatively throughout the term on an independent project studying about a major religion of their choice. The hope is that students will meet the expectations that Fancourt (2010) delineated in his British religious education courses. The course will be "an authentic religious education . . . [that] involves

wholehearted initiation into the manifold structures of religious experience worldwide and the rich diversity of human being" but will also recognize that while religion is diverse, it is also "divisive" and "disputed" (Gates, 2007, pp. 40 and 43).

To support the expectations laid out in this curriculum, a Canadian text resource used in Ontario is an excellent resource for students taking World Religions 120. Oxford Press publishes a textbook entitled *Exploring World Religions: The Canadian Perspective* by Don Quinlan and others. This publishing company describes this source as a book that "examines the place and function of religion in a diverse society like Canada as well as the critical issues facing world religions today" (Oxford University Press). Ideally, this book encourages critical discussions of the impact of religion on the daily lives of Canadians and their interactions with each other. As Sweet (1997) argues: "In its best form, [religious education] would equip young people to make crucial, ethical judgments for themselves in the outside world" (p. 98).

In designing this World Religions 120 course, the goal was to meet many of the suggestions provided in research conducted over the last two years. Fancourt (2010) believes it is important that the study of religion must be set within the context of current issues and experiences (p. 300). This is a crucial part of the World Religions 120 curriculum, and is incorporated throughout the study of the beliefs and practices of major world religions. Fancourt, in discussing his own experiences teaching religion, says: "Discussions were a way to understand, evaluate, reflect, and develop values" (p. 300). This is a valuable component of the World Religions course, and students have the opportunity to both discuss issues in class, and to have private discussions with the teacher through submitted assignments. Earl (2010) argues that students must have "real

interaction with local, national, and international faith communities (p. 276). This is a major challenge as smaller New Brunswick communities do not have many opportunities to experience all the major faith communities first-hand; however, with the presence of several church leaders, a Jewish temple and community center, as well as a mosque all within a short distance of the urban areas of New Brunswick, field trips and/or guest speakers should be emphasized as part of the curriculum. Technology has also enhanced opportunities for interaction on a national and international level. As programs such as Skype are available for use in classrooms, the more difficult task will be to find appropriate guest speakers who can facilitate discussions with students on various faith issues.

Another challenge is the hesitation or fear by educators about approaching the topic of religion in school. Teachers worry about religion being taught in a confessional way. Despite assurances of a non-confessional approach, there seems to be a lack of certainty that teaching about religion has a place in education. Sewell (1998) explains some of the reluctance as due to "secular upbringings" and "little experience with religion themselves" (p. 12). One teacher explained to Sewell that

> The easiest thing is to back away from the issue of religion altogether. There is no support system in place in the schools of education, in academic lounges, in the public schools themselves, anywhere, to help young teachers if they wished to tackle the subject of religion . . . No help from their own academic environment. The topic can be dangerous for teachers: parental blow-back, special interest groups in the community. (p. 13)

There is no question that in order to implement a compulsory religious literacy course, or incorporate more outcomes about multi-faith education into other social studies courses, training must be provided in teacher education programs. On-going professional development should emphasize the curriculum expectations and provide opportunity to engage in dialogue with other teachers on how to implement these expectations. As Peck, Sears, & Donaldson (2008) report, "it would be very possible to be an engaged social studies teacher in Canada and not have participated in discussion or debate about curriculum standards in the field generally or as they relate to diversity in particular" (p. 68). The Department of Education and Early Childhood Services must review its curriculum documents and assess the ability to meet the expectations in these documents based on the courses and resources available in its schools. The executive director of Educational Programs and Services at the New Brunswick Department of Education, Darlene Whitehouse-Sheehan, has recently released a draft for changes to the graduation requirements in New Brunswick (2011, April 8, personal communication, New Brunswick Teachers' Association Board of Directors Meeting). As part of those changes, a grade 9 "Global Citizenship" course is being recommended as well as a grade 10 "Canadian Studies" course. While there is potential to explore issues of diversity and religion in these courses, no curriculum development has taken place so far, and current education programs in New Brunswick are not preparing teachers with the knowledge they should have to effectively teach these courses.

The biggest challenge is to work toward implementing the goals of multi-faith education into the compulsory program of New Brunswick high schools. Clive Beck, professor of the Philosophy of Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education,

argues that "religion needs to be built into the teaching of history, English, social studies, and other courses" rather than taught as a separate course (as cited in Sweet, 1997, p. 245). While a World Religions 120 course is an excellent option for students preparing to be good citizens of Canada, it is only an option. Several students will graduate from New Brunswick high schools without having achieved a meaningful understanding of major world religions and their implications in Canada. As the cultural landscape continues to change over the next several years, I expect to see a greater need for multi-faith education, and more initiatives in New Brunswick schools to teach about multiple religions.

Conclusion

The Ecumenical Study Commission summarizes the role of religion in education effectively when it says:

> Religion is the soul of most cultures, and to omit the study of religion from a student's education would result in a truncated view of that culture. The study of religion from a multi-faith perspective acknowledges the multicultural composition of the Canadian society, but also of the global community. Education about religion presents students with alternative perspectives on the meaning and purpose of life. Religion, and the study of religion, informs us about ourselves, and about what it means to be human. Religion shapes our values, morals and laws and is one of the foundations for thinking about and formulating ethical systems. Religion is often the key in understanding the great literature of the world. A knowledge of religion is essential for understanding a nation's history, and for understanding most of the contemporary political, social and

> economic issues. Religions themselves are often the root cause of many of society's contemporary problems and conflicts, and their resolution is dependent on an understanding of the many religions that people adhere to (Rationale for Multi-faith Religious Education section).

There is a significant role for the teaching of religion in public schools as it establishes the multicultural identity of Canada and prepares students to be positive and effective citizens of Canada, respectful of difference. The federal government has an effective policy on multiculturalism. A hurdle to effectively implementing consistent educational religious programs is that education is a responsibility of provincial governments, not federal governments. Most provincial governments, on the positive side, have their own multicultural policies and a few provinces, including Ontario and Alberta, have made good efforts in providing multi-faith education. This may be due, in part, by the legal right to separate but publically-funded Christian schools – perhaps they want to compensate this privilege by demonstrating some support for studying other religions. Religious education is desirable for public schools, and in order to accommodate parents of various cultural traditions who want their children to be exposed more intensely to their own tradition, effective public education should allow optional courses based on local needs. As mentioned earlier, Sweet (1997) argues that students' personal cultural identity must be accepted in order for them to reach their human potential (p. 14). No effective educator strives for anything less than to help students attain their full potential as human beings. In Canada's democratic, pluralistic society, public schooling is essential, and should make accommodations for all religious groups. In New Brunswick,

an introductory course about world religions is an excellent start to engage students about multicultural issues.

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Appendix A

World Religions 120

Locally Developed Course

Spring 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

General Aim

The general aim of the World Religions 120 program for New Brunswick is to introduce students to the range and diversity of world religions, and to examine how systems of belief affect individual lives and social relationships. Since Canada is a multicultural society with a firm commitment across the country to promoting multiculturalism, students will learn about a variety of religious beliefs, teachings, traditions, and practices. The course also helps students to develop skills used in researching and investigating topics related to world religions.

Rationale

This curriculum document outlines the specific outcomes for World Religions 120 that support the outcomes in the Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum for years 11-12. The curriculum is sufficiently flexible to appeal to all students as they attain the outcomes.

The Social Studies section of the High School Foundation Program states:

> The task of enabling the student to understand and adapt to changes and challenges arising in society falls largely in the domain of the social studies. Developing students so they become informed, active, responsible citizens who understand their roots and have a clear vision of their future and, who are willing to confront issues, and participate in local, national, and world affairs is the goal of social studies education.
>
> To attain this goal there must be a clear relationship between content and process in the social studies. The development of process skills for researching and utilizing information, communication skills, participation skills, as well as inquiry strategies that develop problem solving, decision making, and critical and creative thinking are all essential to reaching the aims of the social studies. Social studies draws facts, concepts and generalizations from history, geography and the other disciplines of social science, and it is the knowledge in these areas on which these skills are developed. The skills are not intended to be developed separately but are intertwined with the knowledge and attitude components of the curriculum. Knowledge, skills and attitudes must be woven together throughout the social studies curriculum if learning is to be meaningful and if students are to be prepared to deal with the great personal and social issues that they will confront in their lives.

The social studies outcomes identified for the Foundation Program have been developed with the underlying assumption that they are extricably linked to the broader cognitive skills that are the foundation of education. The learner is not a mere processor of information but is seen as a thinker whose knowledge, skills, and attitudes are developing, and who is capable of inquiry, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Rationale for Discipline

Students entering their final years of high school are increasingly aware of their world. This awareness often creates curiosity about what others believe and the customs and practices which form part of others' religious observances. In an increasingly global society, students will encounter people of various religious backgrounds. Canada, in the last twenty years, has had an enormous increase in immigration, and as a result, cultural and religious diversity. The Canadian government has vigorously promoted immigration and has received a growing number of applicants from the West and the East, including Asia, Africa, and South America. The implication for Canadian society, and particularly in schools, is that these changes sometimes results in increased prejudice or stereotypes.

In 1988, the Parliament of Canada adopted the *Multiculturalism* Act (Bill C-93), which, in part, states:

3. (1) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to

(a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;

(c) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation;

(f) encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character . . .

As a fundamental social institution in Canada, it is imperative that schools participate in "preserving", and "enhancing" the diverse cultural heritage of the students. By effectively promoting empathy in schools, students today, and adults in the near future, will more likely integrate into a harmoniously multicultural society. Religion is a central component

of culture because religion "dictates the way [people] view the world, including their neighbours, how they dress, what they eat, and how they spend their time and money" (Sweet, 2000, 4). For these reasons, a World Religions 120 course will provide awareness to promote understanding of various religions. This World Religions 120 course should not only inform students about the beliefs and daily life of various religious traditions, but will also examine issues in Canada and the rest of the world which is impacted by religious beliefs that affect the decision-making and the way of life of Canadians. This course is designed to prepare students to function in Canadian society cognizant of multicultural values as they participate as effective, active Canadian citizens.

Objectives

Students who choose to study World Religions come to it with a wide range of backgrounds, interests, and motivation. This course assumes that students have an interest in, but limited knowledge of, various religions. The *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum* (1998) provides the vision of all social studies curriculum which is to "enable and encourage students to examine issues, respond critically and creatively, and make informed decisions as individuals and as citizens of Canada and of an increasingly interdependent world" (v). This document provides the essential graduation learnings and general curriculum outcomes expected of all Social Studies courses. These outcomes are the guidelines for the expectations of World Religions 120:

1. Aesthetic Expression

a) students will demonstrate understanding of the contribution of the arts to daily life, cultural identity and diversity . . .;

b) students will demonstrate understanding of the ideas, perceptions, and feelings of others as expressed in various art forms.

2. Citizenship

a) students will evaluate the policy of multiculturalism and its implication for Canada;

b) students will examine human rights issues and recognize forms of discrimination;

c) students will determine the principles and actions of just, pluralistic, and democratic societies; d) students will demonstrate understanding of their own and others' cultural heritage and cultural identity and the contribution of diverse cultures to society;

e) students will evaluate public issues, taking into account multiple perspectives;

f) students will take age-appropriate actions to demonstrate their responsibilities as citizens;

g) students will collaborate with each other, with members in their community, and with virtual groups in order to gain insight about multiple religious perceptions.

3. Communication

a) students will explore, reflect on, and express their own ideas, learnings, perceptions, and feelings;

b) students will demonstrate understanding of facts and relationships presented through words, symbols, and graphs;

c) students will critically reflect on and interpret ideas presented through a variety of media.

4. Personal Development

a) students will make informed decisions and take responsibility for those decisions;

b) students will reflect critically on ethical issues;

c) students will analyze the factors that contribute to the perception of self and the development of a world view;

d) students will analyze how the function of a group may be influenced by such factors as ethnicity, age, gender, and status;

e) students will analyze and explain the ways cultures address human needs and wants;

f) students will analyze cases and personal values regarding stereotyping, discrimination, and conformity, and how they affect individuals and groups;

g) students will evaluate patterns for preserving, modifying, and transmitting culture while adapting to environmental or social change.

5. Problem Solving

a) students will acquire, process, and interpret information critically to make informed decisions; b) students will formulate tentative ideas and question their own assumptions and those of others; c) students will identify, describe, and interpret different points of view and distinguish fact from opinion;

d) students will analyze and compare events of the past to the present in order to make informed, creative decisions about issues;

e) students will evaluate and propose possible solutions to issues resulting from interactions among individuals, groups, and societies.

6. Technological Competence

a) students will demonstrate understanding of the impact of technology on society;

b) students will demonstrate understanding of ethical issues related to the use of technology in a local and global context;
c) students will evaluate media influences on people and society in both historical and contemporary settings.

Methodology

The units are designed to provide the students with a context for their own values, to explore terms and definitions of religious elements, to study samples of Eastern and Western religions, and to synthesize their inquiry in a culminating task. They allow students to acquire knowledge, to gain experiences that appeal to their interests and abilities, and to prepare them for active and rewarding participation in society. The course is designed to allow students to learn about how the adherents of various religions are influenced by beliefs on a day-to-day basis in a contemporary world. The goal is to ensure students do not just examine religion as a historical narrative, but to focus on the ways in which beliefs, issues, tradition, and practice are entwined. This framework allows students to gather information to make decisions about the dynamics involved in beliefs, behaviours, and values embedded in the course themes. They examine the effects of world religions on individual lives, social relationships, and the human condition.

Critical thinking skills such as the inquiry model, analysing primary and secondary sources, brainstorming, and conflict resolution are a focus of the course. It is of paramount importance in World Religions to examine issues of bias, prejudice and misconceptions related to value systems and personal beliefs.
Students are given multiple opportunities to develop their skills in communication through presentations, role-playing, case study analysis, response journals, writing in role and expository writing. Cooperative group learning is another important active learning strategy. Activities are designed to develop skills and concepts through a range of student learning styles. In addition, the teacher should highlight current global religious struggles and ethical concerns for students to examine.

Assessment & Evaluation of Student Achievement

Each unit has a performance task which focuses on the Social Studies Foundation guidelines for assessment and evaluation, involves multiple intelligences, and uses activities that have application to the culminating activity. The expectations are pared down to represent the specific areas of focus for achievement. The approach for the culminating project is based on "Twenty-First Century Learning" skills listed in *NB3-21C: Creating a 21st Century Learning Model of Public Education Three-Year Plan 2010-2013* (May

14, 2010) published by the *Department of Education (Anglophone Sector).* Examples of these 21st Century competencies include creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, initiative, self direction, effective oral and written communication, cultural awareness, and digital competence.

As stated in the *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum*, "assessment in social studies is an integral and ongoing part of the learning process" (1998, 36). The *Framework for Provincial* Assessments stresses the importance of applying a balanced approach to assessment: assessment for learning (formative assessment) and assessment of learning (summative assessment). Assessment of learning (evaluation) refers to the process of judging the quality of the work based on established criteria and assigned in the form of a percentage grade. Student achievement must be communicated formally to students and parents on strengths, areas of improvement, and next steps. Seventy percent of the grade must be based on evaluations made throughout the course and should reflect the most consistent and more recent evidence of achievement. Assessment strategies will include case studies, rubrics, questionnaires, oral presentations, debates, interpretation and creation of artistic representations, reflective writing, and expository writing. Thirty percent must be based on a final evaluation in the form of an examination, performance, essay, and/or other method of evaluation suitable to the whole course and administered towards the end of the course.

Links to Other Courses

This course presents several links to other courses the students have taken. The teacher and students can make connections to the multicultural and regional aspects of Canada studied in Grade 9 Canadian Identity; the historical significance of the Holocaust studied in Modern History 11, and the Crusades in Social Studies 10, and themes relevant to multiculturalism discussed in World Issues 120, Sociology 120, and Political Science 120. The course also allows for connections to other courses through independent, cumulative projects. In the study of Aboriginal spirituality, students may examine environmental issues studied in Science classes or Environmental Science 120. The mythology and oral tradition of the major world religions complement literacy development in English courses. The skills of inquiry, literacy, critical thinking, communication, conflict resolution, and problem solving can be referred to, and extended from, previous studies.

Prerequisites

Students will have successfully completed Social Studies 10 prior to enrolling for World Religions 120.

Units: Titles and Times

Unit 1	Religion in a Personal and Local Context	10 classes
Unit 2	Revealing the Sacred	10 classes
Unit 3	Origins and Beliefs of Major World Religions	15 classes
Unit 4	Practices and Rituals of Major World Religions	15 classes
Unit 5	Issues and Ethics in a Global Context	15 classes
Unit 6	Cumulative Project	15 classes

Overview of Units

Unit 1: Religion in a Personal and Local Context

Specific Outcomes:

Students will

1. identify the role of religion in human experience and culture, considering religion's place in a highly technological and scientific age;
2. identify some of the diverse religions represented in Canada today and understand how religious pluralism is a defining feature of Canadian life;
3. identify the major common features or characteristics and questions associated with religion;
4. analyze primary and secondary sources to identify religious themes in popular culture, religious bias in media, and religious affiliations in Canada;
5. analyze primary and secondary sources to identify the role of religion in the local community;
6. identify non-religious belief systems and their impact on religiosity in Canada.

In World Religions, students should explore their own values and examine how they hold their beliefs. Students will begin the course by considering various definitions and characteristics of religion. The first unit is designed to give students a sense of the commonalities that exist among religions and to develop an understanding of spirituality on an individual basis. In this unit, students examine what constitutes a community, the roles necessary for a fully functioning community life, how "belonging" to a particular community is expressed, and the effect of community expectations on the individual in

regard to gender roles and milestones such as marriage and divorce. They also examine their own community and compare it to others in Canada to see how the mix of religious affiliations can vary from place to place, and from year to year. Students, for example, will map out religion in their school community. Students will be able to identify the role of religion in human experience and culture but be able to differentiate between religion and ethnicity (for example, defining multiculturalism). Students will use recent news events to understand how misconceptions can influence people's views of various religions, beliefs, and practices (for example, recent debates in Quebec regarding the niqab or the kirpan). Finally, students will define the concepts agnosticism, atheism, and humanism. Students will analyze historical events that created conflict between "belief" and "non-belief" including the rise of Marxism or the French Revolution. Students will consider clashes in society today; for example, the separation of church and state in some countries.

The following suggested activities provide a variety of approaches for meeting the same objectives:

1) Students will complete an entrance survey designed to assess students' prior knowledge of key concepts including faith, ethics, beliefs, mortality, spirituality, traditions, ritual, intolerance, orthodoxy, afterlife, etc.

2) Students will create a recipe for religion using prior knowledge of key characteristics of religion. They will later apply this formula to religions studied to see if it meets the criteria established. As a class, students will then create a list of five to ten essential ingredients (like "has a divinity or divinities", "has an explanation for creation").

3) Students will create a brainstorming map defining religion and providing characteristics of religion.

4) Students will compile a demographic study of the various religions and traditions within the community and/or Canada using personal research methodologies (interviews, surveys), and/or Statcan data.

5) Students will interview another student, family member, or member of the community who has dedicated his or her life to a specific faith or belief system.

6) Students will compile a list of "big questions" students may be curious about, like "Who are we?", "Is there really such a thing as what is right and what is wrong?", "What is the meaning of life?", "What does the word, religious, suggest to you?", "Do you feel

that you have a soul?", "Is there a reality beyond that of the material world?", and "Is death the end or a new beginning?".

7) Students will create a "Personal Credo" providing a list of personal beliefs.

8) Students will analyze a popular song or movie and its consideration of religion. For example, U2's "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" or The Rankins' "We Rise Again", or *Bruce Almighty*, or *The Passion of the Christ*.

9) Students will examine several pictures that represent different religions (for example, a man wearing a kippah, a woman wearing a burqa, a Tibetan wearing a red robe, a woman wearing a habit, a man wearing a turban). Students will attempt to identify the religions associated with the clothing or symbols portrayed. A discussion on the use of symbols in identifying religions will ensue.

10) Students will debate the place of religion in the classroom. Students can participate in a triangle debate. Students will decide the resolution, and take a stand for or against. Students who are undecided may sit in the middle. Throughout the debate, students can migrate around the room if their opinions change. Topics can include separation of state and religion; whether or not Christmas should be celebrated in schools, or whether or not hijabs can be worn in schools.

11) Students will examine the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, the Canadian Constitution, and the Provincial Multicultural Policies to consider government positions on the place of religion in society.

12) Students will define various terms associated with religion or non-religion, including theism, atheism, agnosticism, humanism, immanent, transcendent, incarnation, etc. Once students understand the relationship between these terms, students will compile a list of school or community traditions or practices that may be problematic in a secular society. For further consideration, students may examine the laws of countries under rule by kings who practiced the belief in the "divine right of kings." In a study of pre-revolutionary Russia, for example, students will learn about the religious influence on governance in Russia, Marxist ideology, and its impact during and following the revolution in Russia. Students can then consider the influence of this historical event on government today.

13) As a summative task, students will analyze one issue in the local or national community that has religious implications. The goal will be for students to use primary and secondary sources to examine the influence of religion on societal norms, actions,

policies, or reactions. Students will draw ideas from current events, but examples include: events of September 11, 2001and it's repercussions on Canadian Muslim communities; laws on same-sex marriage; niqab-wearing and voting; separate public Catholic schools; or the abortion debate. Students will identify how these issues were impacted by religious beliefs or will impact religious communities, and they will analyze what are the controversies surrounding these issues. Students should recognize the role of religious pluralism, and also consider the influence of the technology and science on current beliefs.

The culminating project (Unit 6) will be introduced prior to the beginning of Unit 2.

Unit 2: Revealing the Sacred

Specific Outcomes:

Students will

1. demonstrate an understanding of the concept of the supernatural in various belief systems;
2. demonstrate an understanding of good and evil as understood in a religious context;
3. analyze sacred writings and oral teachings from various religions;
4. analyze the role of deity in an individual's life, and in the life of community;
5. compare and contrast polytheism and monotheism.

In the first unit, students identified key characteristics of religion. In Unit 2, students will focus on a primary characteristic: the concept of deity. Students will be introduced to major world religions in this unit, including Aboriginal Spirituality, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Sikhism, and/or Islam. Students will define concepts associated with deity including divine, divinity, sacred, God, Allah, Supreme, Ancestor, etc. Students will identify the supreme being(s) associated with each of the major world religions. Students will explore two contrasting religious views of deity: monotheism and polytheism. By studying about two specific examples of contrasting religious traditions, students will understand the differences between monotheism and polytheism. Students will analyze sacred writings and oral traditions in order to identify characteristics of monotheism versus polytheism. Finally, students will explore oppositional forces of deity in order to understand the various interpretations for good and evil in the world.

The following are suggestions for class activities:

1) Students will talk about their perceptions of, and will be asked if it is possible to draw God or qualities of God. Once students have considered their own stereotypes about God, students will examine art over various centuries to identify other interpretations of the image of God. Students will compare and contrast these images, and consider the accuracy of these images. Questions students will consider include: Why would some religions not try to portray their deity? What would be the function of portraying deity?

2) Students will brainstorm what is evil, and examples of evil compared to examples of good. Based on several images or video clips of the devil (scenes from *Angel* or *Constantine*, for example) as well as readings from various sacred texts (or other source; for example *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*), students will research how media portrays good and evil, how individuals and communities perceive good and evil, and

how various religions explain the role of evil in the world. Students will analyze the relationship between good and evil, and God and the devil. Students will discuss whether or not deity can be evil.

3) Examining historical accounts, myths, and sacred texts, students will research conceptions of immortality and places or beings affiliated with immortality (for example, heaven or paradise; hell or punishment; nirvana; devil or demon (Satan or Mara); angels, etc.).

4) Students will complete an in-depth study of one example of monotheism (Zoroastrianism is ideal as it is sufficiently different from more commonly known religions like Christianity). Students will examine hymns and prayers to draw inferences about the meaning of the deity Ahuramazda to Zoroastrians. Students will be set up in jigsaw groups – first with an expert group and then with their mixed groups to evaluate qualities and attributes of Ahuramazda, forms of worship, and ideas from Zoroastrian cosmology. Upon completion of this study, students will compare the monotheism of Zoroastrianism to other monotheistic traditions.

5) Students will complete an in-depth study of one example of polytheism (for example, Hinduism). Students will become familiar with key concepts including reincarnation, caste, karma, dharma, and samsara. Students will examine Hindu stories, sacred texts, and images to draw inferences about the meaning of deity to Hindus. Students will conclude with a comparison organizer of the similarities and differences between monotheism and polytheism. Students may also examine the belief by many Hindus that Hinduism is monotheistic. Students may compare the Hindu belief in deity in regards to Brahma to the Christian Holy Trinity.

6) Students will compare the relationship between humans and deity among various religions; for example, exploring the themes of covenant, sacrifice or moksha, and salvation. A study of multiple creation stories will provide an introduction to the theme of God as Creator. After exploring stories of (1) the sacrifice by Abraham or the Diaspora in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the life of Siddhartha, students will discuss whether or not "God's side of the promise has been kept" in light of current perceptions of humanity.

7) Students will examine the roles of intermediaries, prophets, saints, gurus, and ministers in order to examine the current relationship between God and humans. Students could examine a film on a "modern-day prophet"; for example, *The Dorothy Day Story*, *The Whale Rider*, or *Mother Teresa*. Students could prepare a biography of a spiritual leader

like the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Pope Benedict XVI or Mahatma Gandhi.

8) Students will identify the characteristics of a prophet through the study of Moses in the Old Testament. Based on this list of characteristics, students will create a "prophet of the 21st century". Students will identify social injustices or evil in the world today (students may draw on information from suggested activity # 2). Students will draw a representation of one social injustice or perceived evil as a depiction of a truly frightening villain for today. Next, the students will put a face to a prophet or hero giving them the qualities they need to battle or fight social injustices and evil. This could be developed into a summative task.

Unit 3: Origins and Beliefs of Major World Religions

Specific Outcomes:
Students will

1. identify the origins of various religious beliefs regarding creation, birth, death, destiny, and afterlife;
2. identify the major influences in the development of various religions (like social unrest, advances in technology);
3. identify influential personalities and summarize their contributions to the development of selected religions (for example, Abraham, Christ, Confucius, Dalai Lama, Guru Nanak, Moses, Muhammad, Siddhartha Gautama, Zoroaster);
4. evaluate the impact of key concepts and events on contemporary religions (for example, resurrection, jihad, ahimsa, Pesach, fundamentalism, revelation, salvation);
5. demonstrate an understanding of the development of the institutions that govern and promote the religious life of a religion's adherents (for example, Sanhedrin, Universal House of Justice, Papacy, Qadis);
6. identify significant sacred writings and/or oral teachings from various religions.

This unit is intended to learn about the origins of major world religions, and to examine the beliefs of these religions. Aboriginal Spirituality, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are major Western Religions that could be selected due to the number of their followers, the longevity of the movements, and/or the political, social, and cultural impact they have had on human development. Resource materials and the inherent interests of the student population may determine which examples are chosen for study. Students will share information with the class based on research they have

conducted for their culminating projects. Also important will be the study of sacred texts to identify the source of the beliefs of these religions.

The following are suggestions for class activities:

1) Examination of "The Golden Rule" from several different religions. Students will use this list of golden rules as an introduction into the beliefs of major world religions.

2) Students will compare and contrast myths of major world religions. They will identify key characteristics of the religions based on the myths – for example, reading myths about human error and punishment by the deity of various religious traditions and completing a comparison chart.

3) Students will create a brochure or display of one of the major world religions. Students will each choose a different religion, and will present these brochures/displays to the class. The project will provide key beliefs, sacred writings, origins, and historical figures. The choice can be based on the topics chosen for the cumulative project.

4) A guest speaker can have a discussion with the class on the beliefs of various religions – invited guests could include a priest or minister, a rabbi, an Aboriginal elder, or an Imam. In examining the beliefs of Aboriginal spirituality, a representative could present to the class the place of dream catchers – students could make dream catchers as part of this presentation.

5) Students will prepare a resume and cover letter of a religious figure who had a major influence on one world religion. The resume and cover letter can be an application for a career as a teacher, or for a job selected by the student. These business documents must reflect research of the religious leader, and communicate the religious figure's point of view.

Unit 4: Practices and Rituals of Major World Religions

Specific Outcomes:

Students will

1. categorize the practices and rituals of various religions (like almsgiving, asceticism, atonement, covenant, sacrifice, holy days, dietary laws, vision quest)

2. identify the origin and significance of various practices, rituals, symbols, and festivals

3. identify the influence of religion on artistic expression

4. describe the influence that differing gender-role expectations have had on the development of religion

Once students have examined the origins and beliefs of major world religions, they will then examine the development of the religions as they adapted to various cultures. This development will include an examination of the influence of gender differences, historical events, and current practices. Students will explore the ways the religions personify beliefs through rituals. A study of various art collections will help students understand how religions were and are perceived by individuals and religious communities.

The following are suggestions for class activities:

1) Students will identify various customs, practices, and rituals including places of worship, ceremonies regarding birth, coming-of-age, marriage, and death.

2) A guided tour of various places of worship can be arranged by the teacher. Local religious leaders can be contacted to host students. For example, previous tours have included a visit at a Cathedral, a mosque, and a Jewish temple. Also, a visit to an Aboriginal community could include a ritual. As a follow-up, students will examine the idea of "institution" as part of the practice of various religions.

2) Students will examine various rituals regarding death and the afterlife. Students will examine various myths and excerpts from sacred texts on the afterlife. Students will watch the film, *Departures* and identify the beliefs and customs of "encoffinment", the rituals of a Japanese Buddhist mortician. Students will then compare those rituals with rituals performed in other major world religions.

3) Students will write a journal reflection answer the question, "How would your life change if you practiced [insert major religion]?" in order to consider the influence of religion on current daily living.

4) Students will choose one theme and prepare a portfolio of collected artwork on that theme. Students will choose from a list of practices or rituals, like birth, marriage,

coming-of-age, death, dress, appearance, and places of worship. Students will collected images from a minimum of 6 world religions and then prepare an analysis of these images, drawing conclusions on what the images reveal about perceptions of religious life. This activity can also encompass other units in that other themes could include religious founders, and specific beliefs like covenants between god and humans and the appearance of deity.

5) Students will role-play an inter-faith marriage. Students will create a potential dialogue between couples considering how both faiths will be accommodated in this marriage. Students will discuss potential issues of contention and the impact of religious instruction on child-rearing.

6) Students will examine various images of headwear including a turban, veil, hijab, niqab, burqa, and kippah. Students will answer the following questions individually, and then as part of a whole class discussion: (a) What comes to mind when you see the following images? (b) Are you aware of any connection to religion? (c) Can you explain the reason for this symbolic gesture? (d) How should we respond, as Canadians, to these images? As these questions are discussed, various news articles or news broadcasts will be viewed and discussed including the 1990 Parliament decision to allow Sikhs to wear turbans as part of their RCMP uniform; the debate in French parliament to ban the hijab; and a satire about a Catholic nun mistaken for a Muslim woman.

7) As a summative task, students will develop a dialogue between three to five people where each person shares information about their religious daily life and their celebrations. This dialogue can be developed through various forms including an Internet chat room, email correspondence, a scripted interview, a comic strip conversation, or a video recording. Through this assignment, students will demonstrate a clear expression of knowledge of practices and rituals, and an understanding of the differences in practices, observances, and rituals shared between the individuals of different faiths.

Unit 5: Religion in a Global Context

Specific Outcomes:

Students will

1. describe the political, economic, social, ideological, and/or geographical impact of religion on at least one culture

2. identify ways in which symbolic meaning is incorporated into public policies and civic practices (through flags, national anthem, observances such as Remembrance Day, etc.)
3. identify ways in which religion is reflected in works of art, architecture, music, literature, dance, dress, cuisine, and interpret their religious significance
4. analyze how the high degree of religious pluralism in Canada's population is reflected in Canadian society and culture
5. analyze attitudes, biases, and prejudices held by adherents of various religions
6. compare various understandings of religion and spirituality, including agnosticism
7. compare the beliefs of theists to beliefs of atheists.
8. examine current issues that challenge faith systems and have influenced changing social and political policies (for example, scientific theories and discoveries, the definition of marriage, abortion laws, cloning, and Tibet's quest for independence).

Since the students have developed a growing awareness of major world religions, students will re-examine the definition of religion and their original criteria for religion. This unit examines how the systems of beliefs, practices, and issues of the religions affect individual lives and current social relationships. Significant topics would include terrorism, denials of the Holocaust, the quest for sovereignty (Tibet, Israel, Khalistan), child abuse, and the growing media attention of Buddhism due to celebrities. Anti-religious movements or sentiment can be analyzed for their purpose and effect. Students will be able to examine major conflicts that occur in various parts of the world today from the different religious perspectives. Students will recognize bias or prejudice in various documents on religious beliefs or practices. Students will critically examine the impact of religion on the various rights and freedoms guaranteed to Canadians, including gender, sex, and other political issues. Students will also be able to examine the growing inter-faith movement promoting harmony and understanding among different religions rather than division and conflict. Students will debate the role of religion in Canada and the world, and its place in society. By the end of this unit, students will demonstrate an understanding of religious pluralism as a defining characteristic of Canadian society. Students will apply the principle of empathy to their critical evaluation of a religious issue or crisis in the world today.

The following are suggestions for class activities:

1) Students will re-examine the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They will identify the rights associated with religion. Students will then examine Canada's Multicultural Act and examine current practice in

Canada (through news articles) and determine whether or not Canada is respectful of these rights. Students will informally debate the merits and shortcomings of Canada's religious pluralism. Students will consider whether multiculturalism hinders Canada's nationalism.

2) Students will complete a graphic organizer about one culture and the impact of religion on that culture. Choosing a country, students will research the political, economic, social, environmental, and/or geographical implications of religious beliefs and practices in that particular country.

3) Students will research about one current controversial issue in regards to religion and social institutions, and will prepare an analysis of this research. Topics could include the wearing of a turban as an RCMP officer, wearing a kirpan in school, registering to vote and wearing a niqab, a political cartoon of Mohammad, the Canadian legislation changing the definition of marriage, the lyrics of the Canadian national anthem (or other national anthem), suicide bombings, religious extremism, all-male priesthood, human cloning, paedophilia and the Roman Catholic Church, or Hilary Clinton's comments about abortion and Stephen Harper's response (March 2010).

4) Students will examine media attention of religion and its influence on society. Students may consider examining a television show's portrayal of religion; for example, *Little Mosque on the Prairie, V*, or *Joan of Arcadia*. Students can analyze the positive and negative publicity of religion in the television industry with shows like *X-Files* and *Bones*. Students may also examine celebrities who have brought attention to particular religions like Richard Gere and Buddhism, or Tom Cruise and Scientology. Another possibility is examining how current events bring attention to particular religions; for example, the earthquake in Haiti and the news attention on Voodoo, or the riots in Burma/Myanmar and the news attention on Buddhist monks.

5) Students will prepare a visual presentation (collage, power point, etc.) of the positive contributions and negative impact of religious practices on community life (in a local, national, and global context).

6) Students will conduct an investigation of the impact of prejudice on Jewish people. First students will research the difference between the Jewish culture and Jewish faith. Students will then examine various periods of time of institutionalized prejudice (Babylonian captivity, English discrimination 13^{th}-16^{th} centuries, Russian diaspora, Holocaust). After studying about these examples of extreme hate, students will inquire

about the influence of this shared suffering on the lives of Jewish people today. For example, students will research about Zionism, and the Shoal Foundation. One suggested activity is to visit a Jewish cultural museum (one available in Saint John, NB) or to have a guest speaker come to speak with the class. Several novels have been written on this subject and students can participate in a literature circle. Finally, students may also examine this issue through a series of films.

7) Students will compare their school calendar and the Multicultural Calendar for that year. Students should notice the religious influences on holiday dates. Students will debate the role of religion in institutionalized holidays and assess the practice of religious pluralism in comparison to the theory of Canadian multicultural policies.

8) Students will examine one scientific issue that has impacted religious belief or practice (for example, students can be divided into groups to examine various topics including human cloning, evolution, big bang theory, and abortion)

9) Students will compare the attitudes and opinions of society that differ from essential religious beliefs, including humanism, agnosticism, and atheism.

10) Students will write a personal reflection of the course. Students will reflect on their original thoughts about religion and any changing attitudes throughout their study. Students will conclude with their position on religious pluralism in Canada.

Unit 6: Independent Cumulative Project

Specific Outcomes:

Students will

1. research using primary and secondary sources, using various forms including interviews, text, websites, and videos;
2. establish the historical significance of the religion researched;
3. identify continuity and change through the development of the religion studied;
4. analyze cause and consequence of major issues in society and their links to the religion;
5. understand ethical perspectives of the religion;
6. provide progress reports and information to the class about the religion;
7. publish a collection of research: writing, power points, videos, drawings, scripts, or any other materials relevant to their research.

The cumulative project will be a term-long study of one world religion. This unit is intended to occur concurrently with the other units. The students are expected to develop expertise about the religion of their choice, and to apply the benchmarks of historical thinking: establish historical significance, use primary source evidence, identify continuity and change, analyze cause and consequence, take historical perspectives, and understand ethical perspectives. The project will be student-centered: the topic will be chosen by the student, and the approach will be designed and customized by the student. Due to this student initiative, the rubric for assessing this project will be a collaboration between the student and the teacher. This project absorbs 15 classes because students will have the opportunity to consult with the teacher and classmates, and provide progress reports throughout the term. Throughout units 1 through 5, students are expected to contribute to class activities by incorporating their research into discussions about the various themes studied in class. For example, during Unit 2's study of deity, each student is expected to share their findings on the deity of their particular field of study. Finally, the students will publish their findings and share their findings with the class at the end of the term. Their published findings may be in the form of a portfolio, a collection of their research, their writings, and their materials (power points, videos, drawings, scripts of interviews). As the project is student-designed, the portfolio must be flexible to accommodate the goals of the students.

This unit is project-based learning. Students will be working independently, but will have class time to collaborate with other classmates in order to acquire feedback on their developing projects. As part of assessment, the teacher gathers information from a variety of sources and provides students with formative assessment and corrective feedback to improve their learning.

Appendix B

Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan for *World Religions 120*

Unit 5 Lesson: *The Religious Component of Nationalism*

Time Allotment: 60 – 120 minutes (1 - 2 periods)

Description:

Having previously studied the beliefs, practices, and issues of Judaism and Islam, Unit 5 lessons are focused on current conflicts that have religious as well as political implications. In this lesson, the students will examine ongoing conflict in Israel. Students will examine the creation of the State of Israel and the subsequent conflict as a result of this created state. The students will be provided with a speech written by an Israeli leader and a speech written by a Palestinian leader. Students will apply their understanding of the religious beliefs to the concerns raised in the speeches in order to answer questions about these speeches. The students will then hold a forum on possible solutions to this ongoing dispute in an attempt to empathetically respond to this conflict.

General Objectives:

As outlined in the Atlantic Canada Education Foundation for Essential Graduation Learnings, students will:
demonstrate understanding of the social (cultural, religious) and political forces that have shaped the past and present, and apply those understandings in planning for the future
acquire, process, and interpret information critically to make informed decisions
evaluate and propose possible solutions to issues resulting from interactions among individuals, groups, and societies

Specific Objectives:

Students will consider the perspectives of teenagers with different religious and political points of view, recognize bias and prejudices, and judge its value based on empathy and the Universal Declaration of Rights.

Students will assess the creation of the State of Israel in response to the religious and cultural persecution of the Jews, and compare this with the treatment of Jews and Muslims in the State of Israel following its creation.

Students will engage and participate in an informal debate, using reason and evidence to support their arguments.

Students will read and interpret primary documents.

Students will analyze the actions, beliefs, and circumstances that led to conflict and violence.

Students will compare responses to conflict in Israel to conflict within Canada.

Materials:

1. Political Cartoon
2. CBC In Depth: The State Of Israel – a series of online articles examining issues related to the creation of the state of Israel (located online at www.cbc.ca)
2. Power point on Israel/Palestinian Chronology of Events
3. Two speeches: Israeli teenager and Palestinian teenager – both speeches apply their nationalist sentiment rooted in their religious identities

Teaching Strategies and Techniques:

Anticipatory Set

Students will analyze a political cartoon. The caption reads: "Holy War 2050". The image is of two very old men, both wearing very little, angry at each other, and waving a branch and a rock at each other. One speech bubble reads "Infidel". The other speech bubble reads "Heathen".

Procedure

1. Two podiums are set up in the class. Two volunteers will act as either a Palestinian youth or a Jewish youth. They will be given a speech to read to the class. The rest of the class will be asked the following questions:

a) what concerns are addressed by each teenager?

b) how much are these teenagers and their responses to conflict impacted by their religious identities?

c) what possible steps can be taken to resolve this conflict?

2. In a whole class presentation, the students will go through a power point providing the chronology of events that influenced Jewish/Palestinian relations in consideration of the land of Palestine.

3. In groups, students will examine various "In Depth" news briefs about the state of Israel and conflict within that state. Students will become "experts" of their news brief.

4. In jigsaw groups, each "expert" will share a summary of their report. The new group will prepare graphic organizer of this information. The graphic organizer can be a brainstorming web, a pro-con chart on the need to create the state of Israel, a cause-and-effect chart on the actions and consequences of Jews and Muslims, etc.

5. These new groups will report their findings to the rest of the class. As a whole class, students will discuss possible solutions to promote peace between the two cultures.

Assessment and Evaluation:

Students will be assessed based on their group work, their debates, and their analysis of possible approaches to peace in Israel.

Resource # 1: Picture

Holy War 2050: Rolling right along . . .

Resource # 2: Speech by Yitzhak Shamir (representing the voice of Israelis)

To appreciate the meaning of peace for the people of Israel, one has to view today's Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel against the background of our history. Jews have been persecuted throughout ages on almost every continent. Some countries barely tolerated us, others oppressed, tortured, slaughtered and exiled us. This century saw the Nazi regime set out to exterminate us. The Holocaust, the catastrophic genocide of unprecedented proportions which destroyed a third of our people, became possible because no one defended us. Being homeless, we were also defenceless . . .

No nation has expressed its bond with its land with as much intensity and consistency as we have. For millennia, our prayers, literature, and folklore have expressed powerful longing to return to our land. Only the Land of Israel is our true homeland. Any other country, no matter how hospitable, is still a temporary station on the way home.

Regrettably the Arab leaders, whose friendship we wanted most, opposed a Jewish state in the region. With a few distinguished exceptions, they claimed that the Land of Israel is part of the Arab domain that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf . . .

In its declaration of independence on May 15, 1948, Israel stretched out its hand in peace to its Arab neighbours, calling for an end to war and bloodshed. In response, seven Arab states invaded Israel . . .

We repulsed the Arab onslaught, prevented Israel's annihilation, declared its independence and established a viable state and government institutions within a very short time. After their attack on Israel failed, the Arab regimes continued their fight against Israel with boycotts, blockades, terrorism, and outright war . . .

Arab hostility to Israel has also brought tragic human suffering to the Arab people. Tens of thousands have been killed and wounded. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs who lived in Palestine were encouraged by their own leaders to flee from their homes. Their suffering is a blot on humanity . . .

We, who over the centuries were denied access to our holy places, respect the religion of all faiths in our country. Our law guarantees freedom of worship and protects the holy places of every religion . . .

I stand before you today in yet another quest for peace, not only on behalf of the State of Israel, but in the name of the entire Jewish people, that have maintained an unbreakable bond with the Land of Israel for almost 4,000 years. . .

We are a nation of four million. The Arab nations from the Atlantic to the Gulf number 170 million. We control only 28,000 square kilometres. The Arabs possess a land mass of 14 million square kilometres. This issue is not territory but our existence . . .

Today it is a dream, but we have seen, in our own lifetime, some of the most fantastic dreams become reality. Today, the gulf separating the two sides is still too wide, the Arab hostility to Israel too deep, the lack of trust too immense, to permit a dramatic, quick solution. But, we must start on the long road to reconciliation with this first step in the peace process . . .

Terms

Sovereignty: political control
Persecuted: mistreated
Oppressed: treated cruelly
Exterminate: destroy
Genocide: large scale killing
Millennia: thousands of years
Hospitable: friendly
Domain: territory
Repulsed: drove back
Annihilation: destruction
Viable: working
Reconciliation: peaceful settlement

Obtained from:

Hairfield, B.B. (1997). Lesson plan assignment: Strom Thurmond institute for teachers. Clemson University. Retrieved from www.strom.clemson.edu/events/seminar/pdf/Hairfield.pdf

Speeches were excerpts from:

The New York Times. (1991, November 1). The middle east talks; 3 speeches: The area is 'a dangerous battleground' - The Syrians 'have never carried the banner of war'. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/01/world/middle-east-talks-3-speeches-area-dangerous-battleground-syrians-have-never.html

Resource # 3: Speech by Haidar Abdel-Shafi (representing the voice of Palestinians)

We, the people of Palestine, stand before you in the fullness of our pain, our pride, and our anticipation for we have long harboured a yearning for peace and a dream of justice and freedom . . .

As we speak, thousands of our brothers and sisters are languishing in Israeli prisons and detention camps, most detained without evidence, charge, or trial, many cruelly mistreated and tortured in interrogation, guilty only of seeking freedom or daring to defy the occupation. We speak in their name, and we say, "set them free" . . .

As we speak, they eyes of thousands of Palestinian refugees and deportees . . . are haunting us for exile as a cruel fate. Bring them home. They have the right to return. As we speak, the silence of demolished homes echoes through the halls and in our minds.

We must rebuild our homes and our free state. And what do we tell the loved ones of those killed by army bullets? How do we answer the questions and the fear in our children's eyes, for one out of three Palestinian children under occupation has been killed, injured, or detained in the past four years?

How can we explain to our children that they are denied education or schools so often closed by the army . . . or why their life is in danger for raising a flag in the land where even children are killed or jailed? What requiem can be sung for trees uprooted by army bulldozers? And most of all, who can explain to those whose lands are confiscated and free waters stolen?

Remove the barbed wire, restore the land its life-giving water. The settlements must stop now. Peace cannot be waged while Palestinian land is confiscated . . .

In the name of the Palestinian people, we wish to directly address the Israeli people, with whom we have had a prolonged exchange of pain. Let us share hope, instead. We are willing to live side by side on the land and the promise of the future.

Sharing, however, requires two partners willing to share as equals. . .
Our homeland has never ceased to exist in our minds and hearts . . .

Self-determination . . . can neither be granted nor withheld at the will of the political self-interests of others. For it is enshrined in all international charters and humanitarian law. We claim this right. We firmly assert it here before you and in the eyes of the rest of the world.

For it is a sacred and inviolable right which we shall relentlessly pursue and exercise with dedication and self-confidence and pride. Let's end . . . this unnatural condition of occupation, which has already claimed too many lives.

No dream of expansion or glory can justify the taking of a single life. Set us free to re-engage as neighbours and as equals on our holy land. To our people in exile under occupation who have sent us to this appointment, laden with their trust, love, and aspirations, we say that the load is heavy and the task is great, but we shall be true.

In the words of our great national poet, Mahmoud Darwish, "My homeland is not a suitcase and I am no traveler."

To the exiled and the occupied, we say you shall return and you shall remain and we will prevail, for our cause is just."

Terms:

Languishing: wasting away
Interrogation: questioning
Deportees: people forced to leave a country
Requiem: service to honour the dead
Confiscated: taken away
Self-determination: right of a people to decide the form of government they will have
Enshrined: contained
Inviolable: unquestionable
Re-engage: come together again
Aspirations: hopes

Obtained from:

Hairfield, B.B. (1997). Lesson plan assignment: Strom Thurmond institute for teachers. Clemson University. Retrieved from www.strom.clemson.edu/events/seminar/pdf/Hairfield.pdf

Speeches were excerpts from:

The New York Times. (1991, November 1). The middle east talks; 3 speeches: The area is 'a dangerous battleground' - The Syrians 'have never carried the banner of war'. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/01/world/middle-east-talks-3-speeches-area-dangerous-battleground-syrians-have-never.html

Resources

Websites

Note: The URLs for the websites have been verified by the writer prior to publication. Given the frequency with which these designations change, teachers should always review and verify the websites prior to assigning them for student use.

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Departures. KinoSmith, 2009. 130 min. (Buddhism)

Kundun. Touchstone Pictures, 1997, 135 min. (Buddhism)

Life is Beautiful. Alliance Vivafilm, 1999. 118 min. (Judaism)

Little Buddha. Ciby 2000. 1993. 123 min. (Buddhism)

Luther. Eikon Film. 2003. 123 min. (Protestant reform)

Not Without My Daughter. Pathe Entertainment. 1991. 116 min. (Islam)

Sophie's Choice. Universal Pictures, 1982, 150 min. (Judaism)

The Passion of the Christ. Icon Productions. 2004. 127 min. (Christianity)

Whale Rider. South Pacific Pictures. 2002. 101 min. (Aboriginal spirituality)

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Curriculum Vitae

Candidate's full name:	Laura Ann Côté
Universities attended:	University of New Brunswick Master of Education Degree 2009-2011
	University of New Brunswick Bachelor of Education Degree 1999-2001
	St. Francis Xavier University Bachelor of Arts Degree 1995-1999