

## Parent Information About the New Alberta Social Studies Curriculum

### *Inquiry-based Learning*

Think back to your own experiences in school. Do you remember a favourite project? What was your topic? How did you share your information? What made the experience so special?

Many of us will remember a project with real-world applications that engaged our emotions and our thinking. This kind of learning remains a strong and compelling memory for those of us fortunate enough to have experienced a self-directed or inquiry-based project.

#### **What is inquiry?**

“Inquiry is the dynamic process of being open to wonder and puzzlements and coming to know and understand the world.”  
(Galileo Educational Network, 2004), from *Focus on Inquiry* (2004).

#### **What is inquiry-based learning?**

Inquiry-based learning is a process where students are deeply engaged in their own learning, formulate questions, investigate widely and then build new understandings, meanings and knowledge with the help and guidance of a teacher.

Students may respond to a question, develop a solution or support a position or point of view. The learning is usually shared with others in some way and may result in some sort of action.

In an inquiry-based classroom, teachers will create an environment in which students are empowered to come to conclusions around important Social Studies issues.

#### **Why is inquiry important?**

Inquiry-based learning provides opportunities for students to:

- develop lifelong learning skills
- learn to cope with problems that may not have clear solutions
- deal with changes and challenges to understandings
- shape their search for solutions, now and in the future.

#### **How might I support my child with inquiry?**

There are a number of ways that you can support your child/youth:

- Take your child to the public library to locate materials (i.e. books, videos, and websites) that will help immerse your child in the topic.
- Read aloud some of the more difficult materials.
- Encourage your child to collect and organize their findings using a KWL (What I Know, What I Want to Know, What I Learned) chart.
- Take time to talk with your child about what is going on in the world (i.e. current affairs).

Adapted from *Focus On Inquiry* (2004),  
<http://education.alberta.ca/media/313361/focusoninquiry.pdf>

The Alberta Social Studies curriculum is built around core principles of citizenship and identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In classrooms throughout Alberta, students will critically examine and analyze important issues and concepts while they consider aboriginal, francophone and multiple perspectives from both the present and the past. This newsletter article is produced by the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium in cooperation with the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia as a result of a grant from Alberta Education to support implementation of Social Studies.

