What We Heard

Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement

June 2022

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B.C. Ministry of Education and Child Care

BRITISH COLUMBIA

MALATEST

Executive Summary

In March 2022, the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education and Child Care (the Ministry), and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) announced plans to implement an Indigenous-focused graduation requirement for BC secondary students. The proposed change would require students to take an Indigenous-focused course or courses, at the grades 10, 11 or 12 level, that make up at least four credits of the current 80 credit requirements for the BC Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood Diploma). The new requirement represents an important step towards reconciliation and will support BC students to graduate with a deeper understanding and knowledge of the experiences, cultures, histories, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples.

The Ministry of Education and Child Care conducted a public engagement process on how best to implement the new graduation requirement, to collect feedback from members of the public as well as focused feedback from key stakeholder groups. An online survey was open to members of the public between March 7 and April 22, 2022. The survey collected input from respondents regarding what types of courses they felt should be eligible for the new graduation requirement, what types of supports will be needed for various stakeholder groups during implementation, and other input around implementation. Additionally, engagement sessions were conducted with a variety of stakeholder groups and written submissions were accepted.

Overall, 5,657 surveys were completed, 27 engagement sessions were conducted, and 8 written submissions were received. Feedback received from the various sources was largely positive and showed support for the implementation of the new graduation requirement; though, it should be noted that nearly one in five survey respondents voiced opposition to this new requirement. Key feedback themes from those who generally supported the new requirement focused around:

- The implementation timeline, particularly that it is not long enough;
- Teacher qualifications and training;
- Provision of adequate funding and resources;
- Need for clear information for students, parents/caregivers, and the public; and
- Broadening the considerations for eligible course offerings.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement 1

1.2 Public Engagement on Requirement 1

2 METHODS 3

2.1 Data Collection 3

2.1.1 Online Engagement Form 3

2.1.2 Stakeholder Engagement Sessions 3

2.1.3 Written Submissions 3

2.2 Data Analysis 3

2.2.1 Survey Data 3

2.2.2 Engagement Session Notes and Written Submissions 3

2.3 Participation and Engagement 4

2.3.1 Survey 4

2.3.2 Engagement Sessions and Submissions 5

3 WHAT WE HEARD 7

3.1 Courses Appropriate for Graduation Requirement 7

3.1.1 Concerns about Courses Identified by Ministry 7

3.1.2 Additional and Alternative Courses for Consideration 9

3.2 Supports Needed 9

3.2.1 Supports Identified by the Public 9

3.2.2 Supports for Stakeholder Groups 10

3.3 Other Comments 12

3.3.1 Implementation Timeline 12

3.3.2 Teacher Training and Qualifications 13

3.3.3 Indigenous Involvement in Program Design 13

3.3.4 Accessibility, Supports and Student Choice 13

3.4 Respondents Opposed to Graduation Requirement 14

4 SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES 17

4.1 Desire for a Longer Implementation Timeline 17

4.2 Need for Clear Requirements on Teacher Qualifications for Courses 17

4.3 Need for Additional Funding and Supports for Teachers and Schools 17

4.4 Need for More Information among Parents and the Public 18

4.5 Broaden Considerations for Course Offerings 18

Appendix A: Survey Instrument 19

1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement

In March 2022, the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care, and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) announced plans to implement an Indigenous-focused graduation requirement for BC secondary students. Under this new requirement, students must complete an Indigenous-focused course(s) making up at least four credits of the eighty required to graduate (accumulated in Grades 10, 11, and 12).

A variety of existing provincial Indigenous-focused courses would meet this requirement (e.g., English First Peoples 10/11/12, BC First Peoples 12, Contemporary Indigenous Studies 12, and others). In addition, First Nations language courses would be eligible as credit for this requirement, along with locally developed, Indigenous-focused Board/Authority Authorized (BAA) courses that meet specific criteria. The Ministry announced that the proposed implementation date for the new graduation requirements would be the 2023/24 school year.

This new requirement represents an important step towards reconciliation and will support BC students to graduate with a deeper understanding and knowledge of the experiences, cultures, histories, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples. The requirement responds to commitments in the Action Plan for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, including the commitment to a distinctions-based approach that acknowledges the unique rights, interests and circumstances of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in BC, and is consistent with obligations in the BC Tripartite Education Agreement. The new requirement also reflects ongoing work by the Ministry, FNESC, and other education partners to build capacity within the public education system to address Indigenous-specific racism.

The First Nations Leadership Council, FNESC, and education partners including the British Columbia School Trustees Association, British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and the British Columbia Association of Institutes and Universities, have previously expressed support for a new Indigenous-focused graduation requirement.

1.2 Public Engagement on Requirement

The Ministry of Education and Child Care conducted a public engagement process on this new graduation requirement, to collect feedback from members of the public as well as focused feedback from key stakeholder groups. These groups included K-12 partner organizations (e.g., BC Teachers' Federation, BC Principals and Vice Principals Association, BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils), post-secondary education organizations (e.g., BC Association of Institutes and Universities, BC Colleges), and internal government advisory councils (e.g., Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women). Feedback from the public was collected through an online engagement portal hosted on the govTogetherBC website, while engagement sessions with stakeholder groups were conducted through focus groups and town hall-type meetings.

The Ministry also made focused efforts to engage Indigenous communities and peoples. This included sending letters to 201 BC First Nations with more information on the new graduation requirement and an invitation to provide feedback through the public engagement website or directly to the Ministry. Similar outreach was conducted with 39 Métis Chartered Communities in BC. Finally, engagement materials and an invitation to participate in the online public engagement were also shared with the BC

Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Indigenous Employees Network, and Native Education College (Vancouver).

Data were collected directly by the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care and the Government Digital Experience division of the BC Ministry of Citizens' Services; these data were then shared with R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., a research and evaluation consulting firm, for analysis and reporting.

2 METHODS

2.1 Data Collection

2.1.1 Online Engagement Form

The online survey, which aimed to collect input from members of the public, was available on the govTogetherBC platform from March 7 to April 22, 2022.

The survey was designed by staff at the Ministry of Education and Child Care and programmed by staff at the Government Digital Experiences division of the Ministry of Citizens' Services. The survey collected input from respondents regarding what types of courses they felt should be eligible for the new graduation requirement, what types of supports will be needed for various stakeholder groups during implementation, and other input around implementation. A copy of the survey instrument is attached in **Appendix A**.

2.1.2 Stakeholder Engagement Sessions

Engagement sessions were conducted with a variety of stakeholder group representatives in an online (i.e., web conference) format. Different sessions invited different stakeholder group types (e.g., teachers, parent advisory councils, school and district administrators) to discuss various elements of the proposed approach such as timing, BAA courses, funding, resources, and system capacity to support the change.

2.1.3 Written Submissions

A small number (n=8) of written submissions were received during this engagement process. These submissions were received from stakeholder organizations (e.g., Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique), many of which had already been invited to participate in engagement sessions; the content of these written submissions reiterated and elaborated on issues raised during the engagement sessions.

2.2 Data Analysis

2.2.1 Survey Data

Closed-ended survey questions (i.e., multiple choice and scale questions) were summarized quantitatively using appropriate statistical methods (e.g., frequencies, means, medians). In addition, some limited comparisons were made among demographic groups on certain key questions; these are discussed in depth in the findings in **Section 3**.

Open-ended comment questions were coded using limited coding frameworks. Frameworks were developed using an iterative approach that randomly sampled from existing comments; these frameworks were then used to code all content collected in open-ended comment fields. Themes identified among comments are summarized quantitatively (i.e., frequencies).

2.2.2 Engagement Session Notes and Written Submissions

Summary notes from engagement sessions, and written submissions from organizations and individuals, were reviewed for top-level themes and issues. Up to ten themes were applied to each document; themes across these documents were then summarized quantitatively (i.e., counts of how many times a

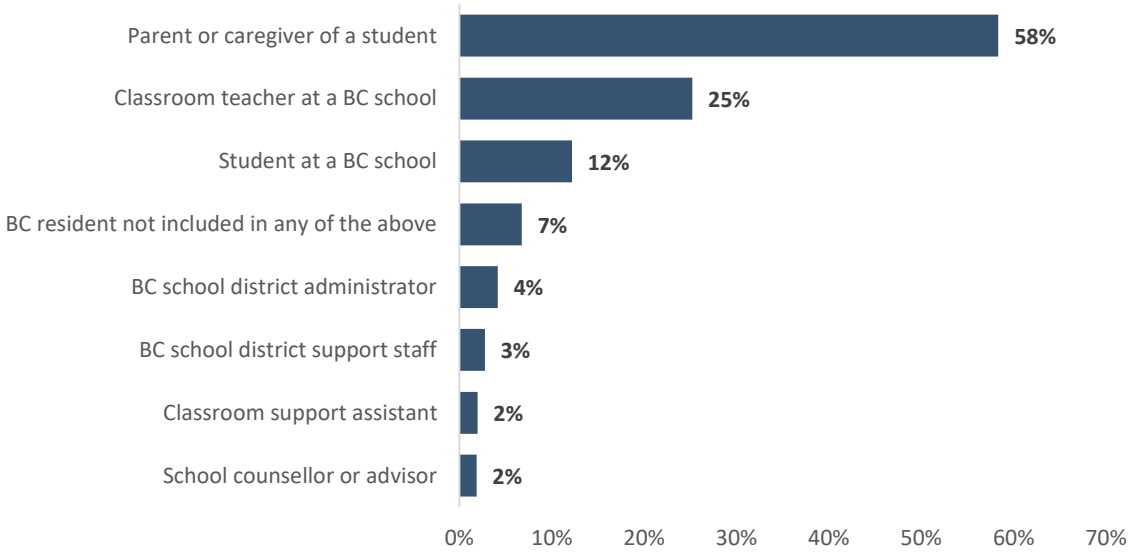
theme appeared across all documents) and findings are incorporated into appropriate sections throughout the findings in **Section 3**.

2.3 Participation and Engagement

2.3.1 Survey

Over the course of the engagement period, 5,657 survey completions were received. Among survey respondents, parents and caregivers were the most heavily represented group: slightly less than three in five respondents identified as parents or caregivers of a student. BC school teachers represented about one-quarter of respondents. Please see **Figure 2.1** below for an illustration of respondent stakeholder groups.

Figure 2.1: Respondents, by Stakeholder Groups

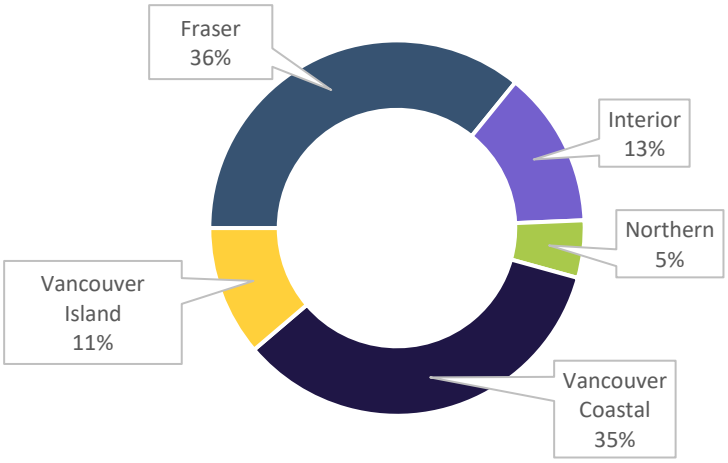


Source: *Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement Public Engagement Survey* (2022).
n=5,657. Please note that percentages may add up to more than 100% due to respondents' ability to select multiple answers.

The survey asked respondents whether they self-identify as Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, or Métis). Of 4,805 respondents who provided a valid answer, 8% (n=448) indicated that they self-identify as Indigenous; this is higher than the proportion of BC residents who self-identify as Indigenous (approximately 6% as of the 2016 Census). A large proportion of survey respondents opted not to answer the question.

Representation throughout BC was achieved in the survey sample. The smallest representation was from Northern BC (n=279) while the largest was from the Fraser region (n=2,022). **Figure 2.2** illustrates the breakdown of respondents by region.

Figure 2.2: Respondents, by Region



Source: *Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement Public Engagement Survey* (2022).
Valid n=5,639.

2.3.2 Engagement Sessions and Submissions

As noted previously, the Ministry of Education and Child Care conducted a series of engagement sessions with a variety of stakeholders and impacted groups, to collect feedback on the proposed approach to the new Indigenous-focused graduation requirement. In total, 27 engagement sessions were held in March and April 2022. Provided below is a list of all stakeholder groups that participated in engagements. Please note that the total number of groups engaged in the engagement sessions was less than 27, due to some groups participating in multiple rounds of engagement.

• Association of BC Deans of Education	• BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA)	• Métis Nation BC (MNBC)
• BC Association of Institutes and Universities (BCAIU)	• BC Student Voice	• Ministers' Advisory Council on Indigenous Women
• BC Colleges	• BC Teachers Council	• Network of Inquiry and Indigenous Education
• BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils	• BC Teachers Federation (BCTF)	• Offshore Schools
• BC Distributed Learning Administrators Association	• Conseil Scolaire Francophone de Colombie-Britannique	• Research Universities Council of BC
• BC Principals and Vice Principals Association	• Canadian Union of Public Employees BC	• Yukon Department of Education
• BC Registrars Association	• District Indigenous Education Leads	• Multicultural Advisory Council
• BC School Superintendents Association	• Federation of Independent Schools Association	• SD61 Indigenous Studies Class (students)

In addition to the above engagement sessions, written submissions further elaborating on the engagement sessions were submitted by BCAIU, BCTF, BCSTA, BC Association of International

Baccalaureate World Schools (BCAIBWS), CUPE BC, Conseil scolaire francophone de Colombie-Britannique, and Métis Nation BC.

Summary notes from the engagement sessions were made; notes and formal submissions were then reviewed and coded for themes and issues identified by participants. These themes and comments are summarized in this What We Heard report along with summaries of relevant survey data.

3 WHAT WE HEARD

3.1 Courses Appropriate for Graduation Requirement

Under consideration for the initial implementation of the new graduation requirement is what courses will be considered eligible for credit. The Ministry of Education and Child Care has already identified the following existing courses as providing credit toward the new requirement:

- BC First Peoples 12;
- Contemporary Indigenous Studies 12;
- English First Peoples – Literacy Studies 10;
- English First Peoples – New Media 10;
- English First Peoples – Spoken Language 10;
- English First Peoples – Writing 10;
- English First Peoples – Literary Studies & New Media 11;
- English First Peoples – Literary Studies & Spoken Language 11;
- English First Peoples – Literary Studies & Writing 11;
- English First Peoples 12;
- First Nations language courses; and
- Locally-developed Indigenous-focused courses that meet specific criteria (in development).

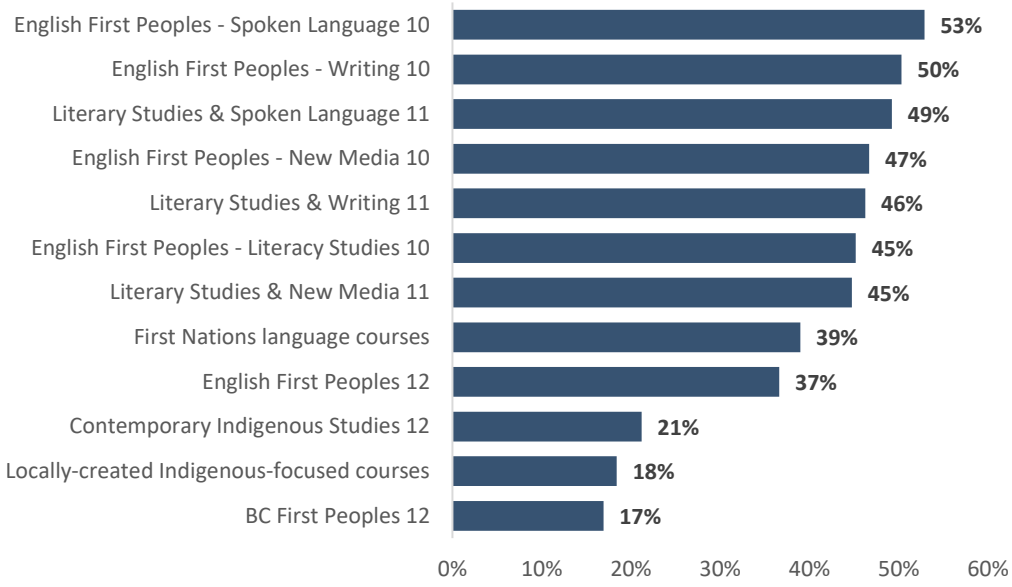
Engagement participants were asked to provide feedback on the proposed courses being considered for credit; the Ministry sought feedback both on potential challenges or issues with the current list, and suggestions for additional courses to be considered for inclusion.

3.1.1 Concerns about Courses Identified by Ministry

Among valid respondents (i.e., those not excluded from analysis for overall opposition to new requirement, please refer to **Section 3.4** for more details), the large majority (89%) did not object to the inclusion of any of the proposed courses under this new graduation requirement. See Section 3.4 for more information. Approximately 11% of respondents (n=467) did identify one or more classes that they believed should not be eligible for credit under this requirement.

Concerns were more commonly raised around English-focused courses, while Social Studies and locally-relevant courses had fewer respondents objecting to their inclusion. **Figure 3.1** below illustrates levels of opposition to each course's inclusion, among valid respondents who raised concerns about one or more of the items.

Figure 3.1: Objections to Inclusion of Specific Courses under Indigenous-Focused Graduation Credit



Source: *Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement Public Engagement Survey* (2022).
Valid n=467.

Of those 467 valid respondents who identified one or more classes they believed should be ineligible for this credit, 333 provided comment on why. The most common themes that emerged from these comments included:

- Concerns that the courses are not "practical" or "useful" compared to other course offerings (n=66, 20% of comments);
- Concerns that the course offerings are too focused on English departments and there is insufficient breadth to appeal to a variety of students and/or this places too great a burden on English teachers (n=55, 17% of comments);
- Expectations that Indigenous content that is already incorporated into other classes should be sufficient to meet this new requirement (n=49, 15%); and
- Concerns that the additional requirement will be burdensome for students (n=46, 14%).

Other themes that were identified in coding included: concerns that the proposed courses force a colonial structure on Indigenous concepts; concerns that locally-focused courses may not be appropriate for province-wide implementation or recognition of credit; and concerns that there are too many options currently under consideration for credit.

Stakeholder groups raised similar concerns about the proposed list of courses. About one-half of these groups commented that the majority of courses were English-focused. Stakeholders recommended developing math and science courses, and courses that include experiential or non-classroom-based learning opportunities, to be available in the offerings. Some stakeholder groups also identified a lack of Métis content as a concern; they felt the courses were overly focused on First Nation content and largely ignored Métis-specific content (including Métis language and history).

A few stakeholder groups also noted that the proposed format for these Indigenous-focused courses (i.e., graded, teacher-led, classroom-based lessons) is colonial. These stakeholders noted that there was the potential to undermine the goals of these courses, and reconciliation generally, by forcing this content into structured classes with traditional, colonial standards such as teacher-led learning, grading, and pass/fail conditions on coursework.

3.1.2 Additional and Alternative Courses for Consideration

Among the 4,605 valid respondents to the survey, slightly more than one quarter (n=1,249, 28%) believed that there should be other course options available under this new requirement, many of which would need to be developed; of these respondents, 1,191 respondents provided suggestions for such courses in open-ended comments. While there were a small number of respondents who recommended specific courses that already exist (e.g., Social Justice 12), it was far more common for comments to identify general subject areas where courses would need to be developed.

Among on-topic responses to this question, the most common areas for new course recommendations were:

- Indigenous-focused social sciences courses (e.g., history, geography, anthropology) (n=350, 31%);
- Indigenous art courses (n=283, 25%);
- Indigenous-focused experiential or outdoors learning courses (e.g., physical education) (n=221, 20%);
- Indigenous-focused math and science courses (n=202, 18%); and
- Indigenous-focused social justice or contemporary issues courses (n=175, 16%).

Other themes identified were coded to less than 10% of all valid comments; these included recommendations to adapt existing courses to include more Indigenous-focused content, recommendations to make eligible courses available at lower grade levels, inclusion of Indigenous language courses in course credit options, and others.

Overall, the wide breadth of different course types identified by respondents reinforces the concern noted in **Section 3.1.1**, that the courses currently under consideration for the credit are too tightly clustered in the English subject. There are opportunities to develop and offer Indigenous-focused courses and content in a variety of other course settings; it was also noted by some respondents that offering Indigenous content in courses that are not traditionally "academic," such as art or physical education classes, would provide opportunities for students with varied interests to engage with the content in ways that will be meaningful to them.

3.2 Supports Needed

3.2.1 Supports Identified by the Public

Survey respondents were asked what supports they expect will be needed by students, and by parents and caregivers, when implementing this change to the graduation program. Among respondents who were not generally opposed to the new requirement (n=4,605), the most in-demand supports for students and their parents or caregivers were:

- Information on which courses fulfill the new requirements (76% endorsed as a resource for students, 41% endorsed as a resource for parents);
- Information on BC post-secondary admissions (62% endorsed as a resource for students, 35% endorsed as a resource for parents); and
- Information on reconciliation (52% endorsed as a resource for students, 21% endorsed as a resource for parents).

Other resources and supports that were noted in open-ended comment fields for these questions included:

- Strong training and qualifications requirements for teachers of these courses (see **Section 3.3.2** for further details) (n=114);
- Funding to support these changes, including classroom learning materials and time for teacher training and upgrading (n=103); and
- Indigenous-created course content and materials (n=88).

Approximately 11% of respondents indicated that no additional resources are needed for students, and 8% indicated that no additional resources are needed for parents and caregivers.

Members of the public, who did not identify with any stakeholder groups in the survey, raised similar concerns in their feedback on needed supports. The most-commonly cited supports needed among these respondents were resources on reconciliation (n=146, 47%), information on eligible courses (n=132, 42%), and information on BC post-secondary admissions (n=110, 35%). Slightly more than one-quarter of these respondents (n=86, 28%) reported that no additional resources or supports are needed for the public as part of this change to graduation requirements.

A few stakeholder groups raised the issue of supports for the public in their engagement sessions and written submissions. These concerns tended to focus on the need for communication with the public about the new requirement in accessible and positive language; there may be a need for "myth-busting" about what the requirement will involve and the motivation for the change. Further, the fact that nearly one in five respondents to this survey expressed strong disapproval of this change (see **Section 3.4**) indicates that there is a considerable amount of negative sentiment about this new requirement among the public.

3.2.2 Supports for Stakeholder Groups

Respondents who identified as teachers, classroom assistants, school counsellors, administrators, or school district support staff were additionally asked what resources they would need for the successful implementation of this new graduation requirement. Respondents' most common answers are highlighted in the table below. Top-three resources for each group are highlighted in green.

Resource	Teachers (n=1,351)	Assistants (n=99)	Counsellors (n=106)	School District Staff (n=144)	School District Administrators (n=228)
Classroom / course resources and materials	91%	78%	n/a	n/a	83%
Professional development and training for teachers and classroom assistants	88%	77%	4%	6%	92%
Resources for students (e.g., textbooks, access to other materials)	86%	73%	68%	n/a	83%
Resources on reconciliation	74%	68%	68%	65%	72%
Information on which courses fulfill the requirement	n/a	n/a	65%	69%	72%
Information on BC post-secondary admissions	n/a	n/a	79%	61%	68%

Respondents had the opportunity to provide additional suggestions for resources or supports that may be needed. Among all stakeholder groups listed above, "more time for implementation" was one of the most common themes identified in open ended comments. Other suggestions included more funding to support these changes at schools, more stringent training and qualifications for teachers (more than just professional development workshops), and involvement of local Indigenous communities in developing and/or delivering course content.

Groups participating in the stakeholder engagement process identified a number of other supports, as well as stakeholder groups, for consideration in the implementation of this new graduation requirement.

Indigenous communities and Elders were identified as stakeholders that will likely be involved in development and, potentially, delivery of these courses (e.g., hosting Elders to share stories with classes). Supports will be needed for school districts and Indigenous communities alike to facilitate networking and collaboration on course development, as well as providing adequate compensation to Indigenous community members who share their expertise. It was noted that care should be taken to avoid overburdening Indigenous communities with responsibility for ensuring that courses are being "done right."

Concerns regarding support for teacher education and training were common among stakeholder groups. For current teachers who will be responsible for teaching this material by the 2023/24 school year, a few needs were noted. First, several stakeholder groups noted that one-off professional development workshops will not be sufficient to appropriately train teachers to deliver this content; other options, such as support for in-service training days or taking relevant university classes in an online or summer format should be considered. Second, some groups indicated that the subject matter to be covered in these courses may be emotionally challenging or even traumatizing (for teachers, as well as for students); appropriate emotional and mental health supports should be available. Finally, some groups noted that broad and comprehensive anti-racism training efforts will be needed for school and district staff over the next few years to ensure that they are able to engage with these materials in a respectful and inclusive manner, and not perpetuate Indigenous-specific racism or colonialist attitudes within the classroom.

Related to the above concerns about supports for existing teachers, several stakeholder groups raised concerns about support for teacher training and increasing the numbers of qualified teachers in the province. Some noted that there is already a teacher shortage in BC, and universities and colleges are struggling to provide additional spaces in their teacher training programs without additional funding from the government. Further, given that most eligible courses under this new requirement are mostly English classes, there is expected to be an increase in demand for English teachers with the training and qualifications to teach these Indigenous-focused courses over the next several years. This point will be particularly relevant amongst smaller schools where an English department may consist of only one teacher. Suggestions included that the Ministry of Education and Child Care collaborate with the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training, as well as offering teacher-training programs throughout the province, to plan for and respond to these challenges.

3.3 Other Comments

A final question invited survey respondents to provide any final thoughts or feedback on the planned Indigenous-focused graduation requirement. Overall attitudes towards the proposed graduation requirement were highly mixed; in response to this final question, 13% of respondents indicated general positive attitudes or support to the change, while 12% indicated broadly negative attitudes towards it.

3.3.1 Implementation Timeline

Among respondents who did not express complete opposition to the new graduation requirement (as described in **Section 3.4** above), a wide variety of concerns and recommendations for changes were made. The most common theme identified among these comments was that the implementation timeline is too quick (14% of valid respondents). These comments tended to focus on how this change would impact current Grade 10 students, that this change is occurring unfairly late in their graduation planning, and that the timeline is too quick to ensure that quality is ensured in classroom delivery (e.g., ensuring teachers are properly trained and qualified, that course materials are appropriate). Seven percent of respondents highlighted concerns that this change would impact students' abilities to pursue electives.

Concerns about the timeline for implementation were echoed by most participating stakeholder groups. A wide variety of stakeholder groups – parents, teachers, administrators, post-secondary institutions, and others – raised concerns about the short timeline for implementation (i.e., the 2023-24 graduating class). Concerns around this timeline included the challenge this creates for current Grade 10 students and the burden it puts on them to change their graduation plans at this point. Some stakeholder groups felt this may impact graduation rates if students are not able to fit in the additional/new course requirements before their planned graduation year. Stakeholder groups also highlighted the challenge of preparing these classes for implementation in just one year (i.e., sourcing appropriate course materials, teacher training and education, counselors supporting students in making these changes to their graduation planning). All of these groups that provided comment on timelines for implementation recommended delaying implementation for at least one year, although it should be noted that these groups were highly supportive of the changes overall. Their concerns tended to revolve around ensuring there is sufficient time and resourcing to implement this change well, and build public support for this change to graduation requirements in the province.

3.3.2 Teacher Training and Qualifications

Ten percent of valid respondents to this question emphasized the need for more supports to teachers, in the form of funding to support these changes as well as time given for further education and training. Similarly, other themes identified included a need to hire more qualified teachers (6% of valid respondents), and the need to support more comprehensive training and education supports for teachers to be qualified to teach these courses (e.g., leave time rather than just professional development workshops, or support to take university classes relevant to the subject matter) (4% of valid respondents).

For more information on stakeholder feedback regarding teacher training and qualifications, please refer to **Section 3.2.2**.

3.3.3 Indigenous Involvement in Program Design

A number of other themes emphasized the importance of Indigenous involvement and representation in this change. Seven percent of valid respondents urged that content for these classes be led by Indigenous voices. A small number of respondents (3%) indicated that they believed the course-based approach does not support reconciliation, as it forces Indigenous concepts and pedagogies into a colonialist framework in the public school system; a few (1%) comments highlighted the need to ensure that Métis and Inuit peoples are represented in the courses and are not overlooked in favour of an exclusively First Nations focus.

For more information on stakeholder feedback regarding Indigenous involvement in course design, please refer to **Section 3.2.2.**

3.3.4 Accessibility, Supports and Student Choice

Finally, a number of themes related to the accessibility of courses were noted in comments. Two percent of respondents urged that a trauma-informed approach be taken to developing and offering these courses. These comments identified the need for counseling and emotional supports for students, the need to include content that celebrates Indigenous stories and culture rather than exclusively focusing on the trauma of colonization, and the need to allow Indigenous students flexibility in engaging with material which may be retraumatizing for them (e.g., allowing them to opt out of classes or earn credit through other means such as volunteering with Indigenous organizations in their community).

Other concerns around accessibility that were raised included concerns that the courses were heavily "academic" in approach and may make graduation requirements more arduous for diverse learners (e.g., those with learning disabilities, non-native English speakers, or those who are simply inclined to other subjects), and concerns about the ability of smaller schools to offer these courses in sufficient numbers to fit with a variety of students' graduation plans.

Apprehension about the ability of schools to offer courses in alignment with this new requirement were raised by some stakeholders, particularly those involved in school or district-level administration. There were concerns that due to a small student body, or a small number of qualified English teachers, only one or two of these courses would be able to be offered at a school. This may more severely impact student graduation plans, as well as potentially create what is effectively a "mandatory class" that feels to students like a "box to tick" rather than a course to be engaged with deeply. There were mixed feelings on offering courses online; while some felt that including online offerings would expand

students' opportunities to engage with this subject matter in a way that felt most appealing to them, others worried this would result in reduced student engagement with the material and, again, treating the online class like a "box to tick" in their graduation plan.

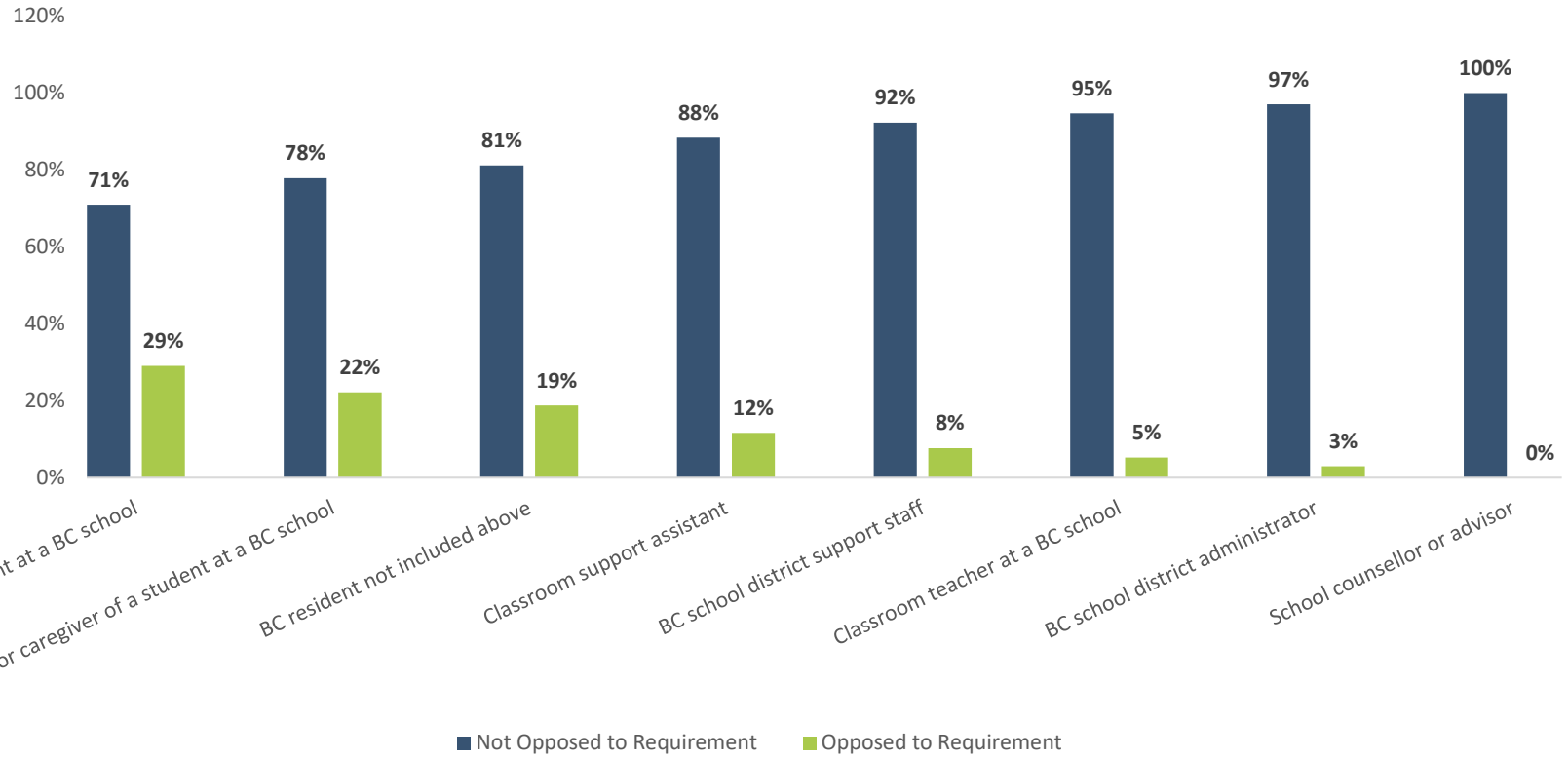
3.4 Respondents Opposed to Graduation Requirement

The online survey hosted as part of the public engagement process was intended to solicit feedback from the public on how the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement should be implemented, and what supports may be needed. However, 1,052 (19%) of the 5,657 respondents to the online survey took the opportunity to voice general opposition to the new requirement.

Due to the fact that their comments and responses were largely off topic, these respondents are not included in the previous sections discussing feedback and suggestions for implementation. However, given the volume of respondents who voiced strong opinions against this new graduation requirement, their responses are summarized here.

Students, parents and caregivers, and BC residents were most likely to be identified as being generally opposed to the requirement, while classroom teachers, district staff and administrators, and school counsellors were much less likely to be opposed to the new requirement. **Figure 3.2** below illustrates the proportion of respondents in each group that were coded as being opposed to an Indigenous-focused graduation requirement.

Figure 3.2: Opposition to Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement, by Stakeholder Group



Source: *Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement Public Engagement Survey* (2022).
Valid n=5,657.

There were no significant differences in opposition to the Indigenous-focused graduation requirement by region. Respondents who identified as Indigenous were significantly less likely to oppose the proposed graduation requirement; about 11% of Indigenous-identified respondents were opposed to the new requirement, compared to nearly 20% of non-Indigenous respondents.

Among respondents who were identified as opposed to the new requirement, some common themes emerged in comments to open-ended questions. The most common themes among this group in the comments provided to Question 17, asking for any additional comments, included:

- General opposition to the requirement (n=445, 53%); and
- Belief that these courses could be offered, but should not be mandatory (n=140, 17%).

While there were some substantive critiques or suggestions for change to the requirement from this group, such concerns were also raised (and raised more frequently) by those who were not opposed to the requirement; as such, these suggestions for change are discussed in **Sections 3.1** through **3.3** of this report.

4 SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

The following key themes have emerged from the findings discussed above. Each is highlighted and discussed below.

4.1 Desire for a Longer Implementation Timeline

While all stakeholder groups and the public largely supported the implementation of the new Indigenous-focused graduation requirement, concerns about the implementation timeline were the most common theme identified amongst survey respondents and engagement with stakeholder groups. Many stakeholders recommended delaying implementation by at least one year to ensure adequate time to develop and refine course content. This includes allowing time to develop and acquire resources and materials needed to deliver these new courses, train teachers, and allow students adequate time to incorporate new courses into their schedule without impacting their graduation timelines.

A longer and/or delayed implementation timeline may allow for some of the concerns raised by stakeholder groups to be addressed. These concerns are summarized in the following key themes.

4.2 Need for Clear Requirements on Teacher Qualifications for Courses

Stakeholder groups and the public highlighted the need for a clear description of teacher qualifications and requirements for new courses. For current teachers who will be responsible for teaching this material, it was noted that one-off or standalone professional development workshops will likely not be sufficient to adequately train and prepare teacher to deliver this content. Stakeholders recommended in-depth training, including taking relevant university classes online or through the summer months; some time would need to be taken to develop a list of suitable teacher education courses that could be made available to all teachers online. To facilitate adequate training, teachers and school districts would require appropriate funding and other supports (e.g., paid time to engage in training).

Stakeholders also raised some concern about whether current teacher staffing levels would be sufficient to support implementation of the new courses in the given timeline, as there is already a general shortage of teachers throughout BC

4.3 Need for Additional Funding and Supports for Teachers and Schools

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of providing adequate funding and supports for teachers and schools to implement these new courses. As mentioned, providing training to teachers who will be delivering new courses will require adequate funding. Similarly, to develop high-quality course content and related material, adequate funding will need to be provided. An important consideration in developing materials is the burden placed on Indigenous communities to ensure that the material is "right" and ensuring that contributions of Indigenous peoples are met with adequate compensation.

Another key finding focused around providing support to students and teachers as some of the subject matter to be covered by these courses may be emotionally challenging. Funding and resources will need to be provided to ensure that appropriate emotional and mental health supports can be available.

4.4 Need for More Information among Parents and the Public

On the survey, most students and parents or caregivers highlighted the need for clear information on which courses would fulfil the new graduation requirements. Additional public communication needs that were identified in the engagement process included including clarifying and re-iterating the motivations behind the new requirements, as well as providing information on which courses will meet the new requirements, post-secondary admission requirements in BC, and more general information on reconciliation. The volume of survey participants who were opposed to the implementation of the new graduation requirement may lend further support to the identified need for a clear public information campaign.

4.5 Broaden Considerations for Course Offerings

Feedback received from stakeholder groups and the public suggests that some consideration should be given to broadening eligible course offerings. Some stakeholders noted that many of the proposed courses are "overly academic" and English-focused. There was some concern that courses would not be practical or useful and some stakeholders wondered if experiential or non-classroom-based courses could be considered. Finally, some stakeholder groups also identified a lack of Métis content as a concern; they felt the proposed courses were overly focused on First Nation content and largely ignored Métis-specific content (including Métis language and history).

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Demographics

1. I am responding to this survey as a: (Please select all that apply)
    a. Student at a B.C. school
    b. Parent/caregiver of a student at a B.C. school
    c. Classroom teacher at a B.C. school
    d. Classroom support/assistant at a B.C. school
    e. School counsellor/advisor at a B.C. school
    f. B.C. school/district support staff
    g. B.C. school/district administrator
    h. B.C. resident not included in any of the above categories

2. Do you self-identify as:
    a. First Nation
    b. Métis
    c. Inuit
    d. None of the above
    e. Prefer not to answer
    f. Open Comment Box

3. In what part of British Columbia do you presently reside?
    Information on regions is available here (opens in new window).
    a. Interior (East Kootenay, Kootenay Boundary, Okanagan, Thompson Cariboo Shuswap)
    b. Fraser (Fraser East, Fraser North, Fraser South)
    c. Vancouver Coastal (Richmond, Vancouver, North Shore/Coast Garibaldi)
    d. Vancouver Island (South Vancouver Island, Central Vancouver Island, and North Vancouver Island)
    e. Northern (Northwest, Northern Interior, Northeast)
    f. I live outside of B.C.

Implementation

4. Thinking about **the courses proposed to meet this new graduation requirement (listed below)**, are there other courses not included that should be considered? Please click here for detailed information on the courses listed below.
    New requirement includes 4 credits from any of the following:
        - BC First Peoples 12
        - Contemporary Indigenous Studies 12
        - English First Peoples – Literacy Studies 10
        - English First Peoples – New Media 10
        - English First Peoples – Spoken Language 10
        - English First Peoples – Writing 10
        - English First Peoples – Literary Studies + New Media 11

- English First Peoples – Literary Studies + Spoken Language 11
- English First Peoples – Literary Studies + Writing 11
- English First Peoples 12
- A First Nations language course
- A locally created Indigenous-focused course

a. Yes (please state course name(s) or describe the course(s) (max 250 words))
b. No

5. Thinking about **the courses proposed to meet this new graduation requirement**, are there any courses listed that should not be included? Please click here for detailed information on the courses listed below.
    a. Yes (please select all that apply)
        - BC First Peoples 12
        - Contemporary Indigenous Studies 12
        - English First Peoples – Literacy Studies 10
        - English First Peoples – New Media 10
        - English First Peoples – Spoken Language 10
        - English First Peoples – Writing 10
        - English First Peoples – Literary Studies + New Media 11
        - English First Peoples – Literary Studies + Spoken Language 11
        - English First Peoples – Literary Studies + Writing 11
        - English First Peoples 12
        - A First Nations language course
        - A locally created Indigenous-focused course
    b. No

5.1 Conditional Question – if any options selected in 5a then respondent will receive:
Please describe why the following courses should not be included as meeting this new graduation requirement? [insert conditional list of courses based on Question 5 response a.]

- ☐ Content does not sufficiently incorporate Indigenous perspectives
- ☐ Content does not focus enough on Indigenous history and/or contemporary issues to qualify as an Indigenous-focused course
- ☐ Content is not accurate (i.e., gets some facts about Indigenous history, language, contemporary issues, etc. wrong)
- ☐ Content will over-face students with emotionally challenging topics
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____

6. What types of resources will **B.C. students** need for the successful implementation of the new graduation requirement? (Please select all that apply)
    a. Information on which courses fulfill the new requirement
    b. Information on B.C. post-secondary admissions
    c. Information on reconciliation
    d. Other (Please describe – max 250 words)
    e. I do not feel any supports are necessary

7. As a **parent/caregiver of a B.C. student** what types of resources might you need as part of implementing the new graduation requirement? (Please select all that apply)
    a. Information on which courses fulfill the new requirement
    b. Information on B.C. post-secondary admissions
    c. Information on reconciliation
    d. Other (Please describe – max 250 words)
    e. I do not feel any supports are necessary

8. As a **classroom teacher at a B.C. school** what types of resources might you need as part of implementing the new graduation requirement? (Please select all that apply)
    a. Classroom/course resources (such as course-specific teacher resource guides, general guides related to Indigenous education, lists of available resources, etc.)
    b. Professional development
    c. Resources for students
    d. Resources on reconciliation
    e. Other/Comment (Please describe – max 250 words)
    f. I do not feel any additional support is required

9. As a **classroom support/assistant at a B.C. school** what types of resources might you need as part of implementing the new graduation requirement? (Please select all that apply)
    a. Classroom/course resources (such as course-specific teacher resource guides, general guides related to Indigenous education, lists of available resources, etc.)
    b. Professional development
    c. Resources for students
    d. Resources on reconciliation
    e. Other/Comment (Please describe – max 250 words)
    f. I do not feel any additional support is required

10. As a **school counsellor/advisor at a B.C. school** what types of resources might you need as part of implementing the new graduation requirement? (Please select all that apply)
    a. Information on which courses fulfill the new requirement
    b. Information on B.C. post-secondary admissions
    c. Information on reconciliation
    d. Other (Please describe – max 250 words)
    e. I do not feel any supports are necessary

11. As a **B.C. school/district support staff** what types of resources might you need as part of implementing the new graduation requirement? (Please select all that apply)
    a. Information on which courses fulfill the new requirement
    b. Information on B.C. post-secondary admissions
    c. Information on reconciliation
    d. Other (Please describe – max 250 words)
    e. I do not feel any supports are necessary

12. As a **B.C. school/district administrator** what types of resources might you need as part of implementing the new graduation requirement? (Please select all that apply)
    a. Information on which courses fulfill the new requirement
    b. Information on B.C. post-secondary admissions
    c. Information on reconciliation
    d. Professional development for B.C. classroom teachers and classroom support/assistants
    e. Resources for students
    f. Resources on reconciliation
    g. Other (Please describe – max 250 words)
    h. I do not feel any supports are necessary

13. As a **B.C. resident** what types of resources might you need as part of the implementation of the new graduation requirement? (Please select all that apply)
    a. Information on which courses fulfill the new requirement
    b. Information on B.C. post-secondary admissions
    c. Information on reconciliation
    d. Other (Please describe – max 250 words)
    e. I do not feel any supports are necessary

14. Thinking about **professional development**, what types of resources/activities might be required in order to successfully implement a new Indigenous-focused graduation requirement? (Please select all that apply)
    a. Webinar series – pre-recorded and always available
    b. Webinar series – live and interactive
    c. Local/regional training sessions
    d. Other/Comment (please describe – max 250 words)

15. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions on the proposed model and/or how best to implement the new Indigenous-focused graduation requirement?
    a. Please describe (max 250 words)