



## 2012-2013 AESN Inquiry Case Study

**School Name:** Highland Secondary

**District:** #71 Comox Valley

**Inquiry Team Members:** Toresa Crawford, Shelley Kleeman, Brenda MacPherson

**AAEA Goal Area:** To increase the awareness and understanding of First Nations, Metis and Inuit history, traditions and culture for all students.

**Question/Focus:** Will using formative assessment strategies, including the BC performance writing standards to communicate information and literary writing, help improve Grade 9 students writing in the area of their culture? Will students completing their own mask representing their culture help them to develop an understanding about themselves, as well as the Aboriginal culture?

**Scanning:** Upon learning about the First Nations people the students completed an inquiry question with an essay component which was the student's own question based on some aspect of the First Nation culture. This created an interest in learning more about the First Nation peoples. The students were to complete the mask that focused on representing who they are as a person, which also for some included their culture. In a Talking Circle format, the students explained their mask and what it represented. Several student masks represented their culture while the majority of masks represented who they were as a person.

**Focus:** What started out as a writing to focus on their culture, turned into a piece of poetry that explained the mask and how it represented the individual students. In order for the students to understand another group of people, they would first have to understand themselves. Upon this understanding then make a connection between themselves and the First Nations Peoples.

**Hunch:** In preparation for students to complete their mask, they were introduced to the importance of the mask in the First Nations culture and saw several examples of masks. I, as well as my EA, completed our own mask and contributed to the Talking Circle explaining the significance of our masks. I also read some poetry that represented my mask. The students enjoyed the creative part which allowed them to paint what was inside them, as well as to write about their mask.

**New professional learning:** After completing the inquiry question the students were interested in learning more about the culture of the First Nations peoples, which resulted in the students being more engaged and invested in completing the mask, as well as its' significance. This is the second time I've done the mask project with my students and felt it was much more successful because of the initial inquiry question approach to the First Nations unit of study. Rather than write a story about its significance, it was more powerful when the students created poetry about their mask.

**Taking action:** After introducing the mask project, the students completed an inquiry question about the First Nations peoples. The question was based on a Know, wonder, learn activity, with the wonder and or learn part turned into an inquiry question. Many of the questions were based on the artistic culture of the First Nations peoples. The students were engaged in learning more about the First Nations people as well as the personal aspect in the completion of their mask and the poetry regarding their mask.

**Checking:** The evidence was based on student feedback. When students were asked about creating their own inquiry question, it was found that the majority of the students preferred creating their own question, prompting more of an engagement in the learning. When asked about the mask activities, the students did enjoy the creation of the mask as well as the poem. Some finding the significance of the ideas easy while some found it difficult to communicate. Some of the students were surprised about how personal the students were during the Talking Circle.

**Reflections/Advice:** The students were on task and some eager to share their work with me as well as the class. Some students were reluctant to share in a big group setting, but shared a more personal perspective in a one on one situation. Other students offered to share their work with another class in another district. It is my plan to continue with this idea next year developing the idea of an inquiry question specifically around the idea of the mask and its significance.

***EVERY learner crossing the stage with dignity, purpose and options.***