



AESN 2012-2013 Inquiry Case Study

School Name: WOODLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOL

District: #68 Nanaimo/Ladysmith

Inquiry Team Members: Bonnie Bill, Connie MacArthur, Theresa Watson

AEAA Goal Area: Emotion

Question/Focus:

Will having a 'Girlz'tuff' group at Woodlands Secondary School:

- enhance adolescent girls sense of belonging by
- promoting positive self-image, positive self-talk and positive self-care?

Scanning:

In examining the school community of learners (specifically Aboriginal adolescent girls) at Woodlands Secondary School, the Inquiry Team members recognized a need to introduce the adolescent female students to Aboriginal concepts and tools to make healthy decisions as they encounter and address many personal and social challenges.

Observations:

- Girls seem uncertain in themselves, lacking confidence and self-esteem.
- Girls are bringing concerns to AEA of face-book bullying, rude & racist behavior/remarks of others.

Conversations with the girls, we talked about what it is in life that can make being a girl difficult:

- People judge you all the time and expect you to act a certain way
- People judge you for how you look and that makes me sad
- People can be sooo rude and don't even know you
- People gossip and spread rumors on face book and that hurts (face-book safety tools, next topic)
- People are hurtful when they exclude you because you're you ,and can't accept you
- People think you have to look a certain way before you're cool (self-image tools, next topic)

Focus:

Will having a 'Girlz'tuff' group at Woodlands Secondary School:

- enhance adolescent girls sense of belonging by
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The Woodlands Aboriginal Leadership Team (WALT) supported having an Inquiry Team to support adolescent girls' growth and development by establishing a pro-active empowerment 'Girlz'tuff' group at Woodlands Secondary School. This group gathered formally for twelve sessions from November to May, and informally for circle chats as requested by the participants. The objective to promote adolescent girls' self-esteem and self-care by providing them with the strength and skills to make healthier decisions with a holistic Aboriginal cultural focus was met. This focus matched the Spirit and Emotional goals set down in our District 68 Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement.

Hunch:

The Inquiry Team Facilitators of the 'Girlz'tuff' group addressed the observations made in the scanning process by starting a "Girlz'tuff" group.

At the beginning of this journey of inquiry, the school AEA shared a story of why to do this inquiry.

*"A little girl was noticed walking along the beach, collecting as many starfish as she can,
and throwing them back into the ocean.
When asked why she was doing this, answered,
I know I cannot save all the starfish but I can at least try to save some of them."*

As Inquiry Team Facilitators, two passionate leaders, the AEA & District Teacher Aboriginal Education, created a vision: to help create positive change in the student lives of young ladies in their school by co-planning and co-facilitating, creating strategies, incorporating the Aboriginal Talking Circle, Medicine Wheel, sharing conversation and healthy food, role modeling, having fun and learning together.

New professional learning:

Two of the Inquiry Team Facilitators participated in and became certified trainers in the Girl Power Education Groups/WCET. We designed and facilitated the 'Girlz'tuff' group at Woodlands Secondary School. We shared what we have learned with the District Aboriginal Education staff and school staff.

Taking action:

Inquiry Team Facilitators Bonnie Bill and Connie MacArthur, proposed to collaboratively initiate a 'Girlz'tuff' group at Woodlands Secondary School where adolescent girls explored and questioned: healthy relationships/boundaries; how the media can have an impact on self-image; and eliminating negative self-talk. The group examined Aboriginal stories, historical trauma, and cultural competence through sincere dialogues and applicable activities.

Each of the twelve sessions was done in an Aboriginal circle, using Aboriginal protocols and teachings, sharing stories, related activities and healthy food.

Checking:

The Inquiry Team knows that having a 'Girlz'tuff' group at Woodlands Secondary School is making a difference in how the adolescent girl participants view themselves by comparing: pre- and post-sharing; student testimonials and journal writings about: "What is difficult about being a girl today?"; and other activities that questioned and strengthened self-esteem and self-image.

See the results below.

Tracking:

- KWL pre & post dialogue
- School Survey created by Laura Tait, May 2013
- November – 29 girls, grades 8-12 attended, including 3 foreign exchange students
- By May – we consistently had 12 girls attending on a regular basis
- End of May closed with a celebration of sharing, conversations and games
- This was a successful, heartwarming journey, well worth doing again.

Comments made by others:

- School Administrator: "I love the Inquiry Question. I think it is critically important for our girls to have as many skills as they can to cope with this big world we live in."
- Classroom Teacher: "This is fabulous Connie. I appreciate the level of commitment and the intent of the program. It is such a necessary program for these busy young ladies."
- Girlz'tuff participants: share that they love the program and look forward to each gathering, see chart below for what the girls shared about their learning.

November 2012 - May, 2013 Woodlands Secondary School

Inquiry Project – Pre/Post-Survey

Inquiry Question:

Will having a 'Girlz'tuff' group at Woodlands Secondary School:

- enhance adolescent girls sense of belonging by promoting:
 - positive self-image, positive self-talk and positive self-care?

Learning Intentions: SWBAT:

- explain the basic process of the Aboriginal Talking Circle – protocols & values
- identify factors that increase mental health (i.e.; strong sense of value and meaning of life; increase individual and collective self-esteem; increase stress management skills, increase communication skills, increase sense of belonging; importance of confidentiality)

Know	Wonder
<p><i>What do you know about Girl Talk?</i> <i>What is one thing that you know is difficult about being a girl today?</i></p>	<p><i>What do you wonder about Girl Talk?</i> <i>What is one thing that you wonder is difficult about being a girl today?</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pressure - drama - judgements - insecurity - feeling having to dress a certain way - 'cool' to be in - people expect you to be something you're not - exclusion - stress/daily expectations - rude people - sexuality judgement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hopes - people won't judge me - everybody could be themselves and not be judged - stop spreading rumours - group can be fun - people stand up for who they are - hope girls leave here feeling good about themselves - less clicky - Less drama - stop judging people by their size - girl club supportive of others – confident - pride
<p>Learned – May 2013</p>	
<p><i>What have you learned about Girl Talk? (strong sense of self)</i> <i>What is one thing that you have learned about positive factors that increase mental health?</i> <i>What have you learned about Aboriginal Talking Circles?</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learned my culture - Strengths = cooking, P.E. - Self-pride - Learned about medicine bags - Strength - Trust - Hope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proud to be an Aboriginal woman - About making us better women - Not to take things seriously - loyalty - Girl Power - Friendship - Acceptance

