

**ABORIGINAL ENHANCEMENT SCHOOLS NETWORK
2011-2012**

**GRAND FORKS SECONDARY
#51 Boundary**

Leadership Team

Wanda Hecht, Victoria Runge, Scott Stewart

Contacts

wanda.hecht@sd51.bc.ca, victoria.forrester@sd51.bc.ca

School Context/Community Involvement

Grand Forks Secondary School is located in Boundary School District #51. There are 425 students enrolled and we have a teaching staff and support staff of approximately 25. We are a rural school surrounded by beautiful scenic mountains and rivers. We have an Aboriginal population of 24% which does not include a band or reserve. Our district includes school from Big White to Christina Lake and beyond, an area of approximately 250 km. Grand Forks enjoys a supportive parent and community base that works together with our schools to ensure the best possible learning environment for our students.

School Inquiry and Action

School Question

Will the development of an activity based lunch time program lead by elders within our community improve the Aboriginal graduation rate for 2012?

Focus of Inquiry

This year we began an activity based lunch time program with 2-5 elders within our community. The objective was to encourage students to interact with elders during the activities that were scheduled at lunchtime, thus increasing their sense of belonging and encouraging them to take ownership of their own learning. It would also afford them time with adults to discuss other issues they might need to talk with an adult with.

Links with District Enhancement Agreement

This directly links to our Enhancement Agreement goal of: Ensuring that all students of Aboriginal ancestry graduate from high school.

Strategies:

This program initially began in an attempt to help students with issues they might be facing that would need the perspective of an adult. We had several Medicine Wheel circles in which students were asked to participate by coming forth with activities within the four areas of the medicine wheel, Spiritual, Emotional, Physical and Intellectual. We then asked students to brainstorm about additional activities that and areas that should be covered. We then invited Metis artist and elder Terry Jackson and Joan Holmes in to work during lunch hours one day a week. Terry agreed to develop and complete a wall mural working with students to implement their own design into the overall mural design. Joan worked with students on an individual basis to make drums for the school. Each Wednesday students of Aboriginal descent were invited to work alongside these elders.

School Findings

In 2010-2011 our graduation rate was 85%.

In 2011-2012 our graduation rate is 93%.

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AESN Plans for 2012-2013

Our plan for the next school year will be to increase the Elders program to two lunchtimes per week and bring in additional elders on a regular basis.

Reflections, Advice

We have observed that the inclusion of elders within the school setting encourages students to spend time with adults gathering advice and practical knowledge that they will need later in life. It also encourages youth to discuss the balance that is found with all things in life and to become aware of the balance with their own life. Believing that someone cares is often what a student needs to believe in themselves.