

**ABORIGINAL ENHANCEMENT SCHOOLS NETWORK
2011-2012**

**RANDERSON RIDGE ELEMENTARY
#68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith**

Leadership Team

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School Context/Community Involvement

Randerson Ridge Elementary is located in Nanaimo on central Vancouver Island, British Columbia. The area is north Nanaimo consisting primarily of middle class families with children coming well prepared for school. Parents are largely involved in their child's education. Our overall population is approximately 315 students with the Aboriginal population being approximately 22 students.

We consulted our Aboriginal department on several occasions to co-plan units and advise us about protocol. In addition, the Aboriginal department facilitated our staff through a Level 1 Workshop on Aboriginal Understandings as a way to support us developing an awareness of Aboriginal culture, history and present day issues facing Aboriginal people due to historical injustices.

School Inquiry and Action

School Question

How will enhancing our community of learners' understanding from an Aboriginal perspective, both in historical and contemporary context, work toward building success for all students?

Focus of Inquiry: Further developing a community of learners with an Aboriginal perspective.

Links with District Enhancement Agreement

Goal 2: To improve Aboriginal student knowledge of history, culture and language in order to enhance a sense of pride in Aboriginal heritage.

Goal 4: To improve Aboriginal student self-concept and sense of belonging.

Key Learning Principles addressed in this year's inquiry:

- Learners must own their own learning – including learning how to be actively engaged and meta-cognitive.
- Learning must be social and the learning environment must encourage well-organized cooperative learning.
- Learning professionals need to be tuned into learner emotions and motivation, and understand the key role that emotion plays in learning.
- Learning professionals are acutely sensitive to the individual differences among learners, including their prior knowledge.
- Learners are engaged in programs that demand hard work and challenge from them – without overload.
- Learners are in an environment characterized by clarity of expectations and formative feedback.

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Strategies

- Teachers and Aboriginal department met to collaborate on goals, strategies, protocols, assessment, and resources
- Grade 4/5 class taught the grade 3's in September about the community of learners process. Teachers infused Aboriginal teachings through film, art and dance as well as fiction and non-fiction text to help create an understanding of Aboriginal values and historical injustices to support us becoming a stronger community of learners.
- Because we wanted to spread our understandings throughout the school we shared our learning at a learning showcase in December
- In March we visited Susan Leslie's Aboriginal class in Courtney/Comox District to see how she had applied a community of learners' concept to her classroom setting. We invited our K/1 teacher to join us. When we returned to our school we taught the K/1's and grade 2's through a peer coaching process how the community of learners' process could be applied their classrooms. To enrich the process further we integrated a circle protocol into the opening and closing of the lessons as a way to respect the Aboriginal traditions of learning.

Focus on Formative Assessment Learning Strategies

The community of learners' criteria along with the circle opening and closing is a way to integrate assessment for learning practices throughout the school year. We use the criteria to guide how we work together and give each other feedback using the criteria. This also supports self-regulation skills. Adding the talking circle learning protocol has strengthened the feeling of being connected and supported. It is a comfortable way to give feedback in a very non-threatening environment as well as problem solve when issues arise within the group. Susan's modeling of how to conduct a circle was a way to strengthen understanding of who we are and where we come from. This comes from the Salish traditional value to know yourself. When we know who we are as learners and tie it to a personal connection we deepen our metacognition and develop a sense of belonging within our environmental context.

School Findings

	NY	A	M	E
Grade 3-Fall 2011	0	5	16	0
Grade 3-Spring 2012	0	1	4	16
Grade 4/5-Fall 2011	3	16	9	0
Grade 4/5-Spring 2012	0	0	13	15

AESN Plans for 2012-2013

We would like to continue our plans next year to peer coach others within the school about the community of learners with an Aboriginal perspective. Peer coaching is a way for us to develop student leadership and advocacy for doing what is just and speaking up when it is necessary. We hope to continue to connect within our school and throughout the global community using technology to help us work with others that are not so easily accessed. For example, this year we connected to the author of Fatty Legs through skype. We learned so much about their Aboriginal community in the north and how they conducted themselves as a community of learners. It was an enriching experience for all of our students. We would like to experience the same with other Aboriginal role models to deepen our understanding of contemporary Aboriginal people.

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Reflections, Advice

Connecting with your local Aboriginal community to broaden your understanding of the contemporary Aboriginal perspective is very important. Students coming from a white middle class community have a limited perspective of the issues Aboriginal people face and the historical injustices. Although our Aboriginal population is small it is important for our students to see the bigger picture as we become more connected within a global community. They are our citizens of the future. If we hope to prevent the mistakes of the past we need to help our students think critically through the issues. In addition, many of the school resources pertaining to Aboriginal understandings focus on the historical facts pertaining to their day to day living. We need to access supplemental resources to find age appropriate content that presents the historical injustices. Our Aboriginal department has consistently provided the leadership and guidance in helping us meet this need and educate us about the contemporary and historical truths.