

**ABORIGINAL ENHANCEMENT SCHOOLS NETWORK  
2011-2012**

**SINKUT VIEW ELEMENTARY  
#91 Nechako Lakes**

**Leadership Team**

Nicole Arnold, Patty Borek, Marty Floris, Jill French, Jo-Anne Kellam, Debbie Stephen

**School Context/Community Involvement**

Will share ideas and successes with the First Nations Education Council for SD#91, will work closely with the local First Nations.

**School Inquiry and Action**

**School Question**

Will journaling help students improve their communication skills? Will journaling improve literacy for Aboriginal students and subsequent dogwood completion?

**Focus of Inquiry**

We became aware through students' journaling, that the learning taking place had more to do with valuing diversity and understanding aboriginal protocols than actually developing writing skills. We found the learning taking its own direction, and students moving towards areas of social responsibility criteria, with the journaling being an aside.

With our field trip to the Stellaquo River early in the year, our initial intentions were to have students study and become more aware of their environment, with journaling to show their learning. Not only did students meet this intention, but we were all surprised when the students became the teachers, mentoring the younger kids and the staff, and taking the project from a science rubric into the arena of Aboriginal learning styles, and social responsibility. Staff and students immediately recognized the power of this experience, and when time came later in the year to skin and tan a moose hide, that practice was repeated without coaching or prompting. It seems to be intrinsic to a child's nature to learn this way, and we (staff) are humbled and excited by our own learning this year.

**Links with District Enhancement Agreement**

To improve literacy and Dogwood completion rates for students of Aboriginal ancestry as per the performance goals on the Nechako Lakes Enhancement Agreement.

**Strategies**

Initially we were to use regular journaling as indicators of growth. We were to use school wide writing assignments and s/w projects as reasons to write. However, our writing was not as focused and cross grade as we initially intended, and our projects became something other than just fodder for writing. With our realization of the Aboriginal learning styles as intrinsic to student experiences, we shifted our attention in our projects to seeing how students met social responsibility criteria instead. For example, students learned (and their writing showed) that if we are to work with a hide, we need to be respectful to the animal that offered the hide to us. They wrote about the teamwork involved in working a hide, and they thought about how these things were done in pre-contact times.

**School Findings**

Shifting from journaling and using writing rubrics to social responsibility rubrics. These rubrics were only one expression of the learning that took place, for students and staff this year.

**ABORIGINAL ENHANCEMENT SCHOOLS NETWORK**  
**2011-2012**

We did not create a graph showing students' progression through the journal writing rubric, but would like to offer some examples of students' writing as it pertains to social responsibility instead.

"It was really hard scraping the fur of the moose. In the older days they used things in the environment instead of now they use a car part...I wonder how long it takes for an elder to scrape a hide, and what resources did they use for scraping tools." (grade 5)

(Social Responsibility Scale: valuing diversity and defending human rights)

"Today we made the frame and put in the holes. I thought putting the holes would be easy but it was very hard because the moose is strong...I wonder what they used for string on the first hide before twine?" (grade 5)

"We were cutting the little skin in the inside – people were tying skinny logs together to make a hide to stretch the moose hide...It was cool to see everyone helping and putting effort into what they were doing." (grade 5)

(Social Responsibility Scale: contributing to the classroom and school community)

"It did smell a little weird. It didn't smell that pleasant. It's hair was really soft like a baby's bottom. I think that all of the schools should do this to show our nation what the first nations did and still do to survive, but lots of people do this even when they are not First Nations even I skinned a grouse before it was cool." (grade 4)

(Social Responsibility Scale: valuing diversity and defending human rights)

"It smelt weird but I'm not complaining because she (Shanna) said it was disrespectful...I learned that you can use moose shin bone to cut the hide if you don't have a knife...I was mostly listening to her when I was scraping the hide." (grade 5)

(Social Responsibility Scale: valuing diversity, solving problems in peaceful ways.)

**AESN Plans for 2012-2013**

Continue the work we are doing to make sure that Sinkut View students cross the stage with dignity, purpose and options.

**Reflections, Advice**

A number of external factors influenced the success and direction of our inquiry this year. Our staff learning was profound when we saw the Aboriginal learning style in practice, not by our own hand, but by that of the students'. We learned that our measurement of learning (rubric) is not always accurate and can't be rigid or exclusive. We need to be flexible, and sometimes there are no rubrics for the learning we see.